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A MANUAL OF
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.



JOHN M CHARLTON, M.A.





*A MANUAL OF
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.*



A MANUAL
OF
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM;

OR,

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF
CONGREGATIONALIST VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM,
WITH THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THEY REST.

INTENDED SPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY
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PREFACE.

THIS little work is intended to meet the wants of a large class of persons, particularly among the younger members of our congregations, who are precluded, by want of leisure, from the perusal of more learned and elaborate treatises. To such treatises the author very readily acknowledges his own obligations, and more especially to the very able and complete investigations of Dr. Halley and Professor Godwin, to which he would refer those of his readers, who desire further information on the subject.

The author has carefully sought to avoid, in the following pages, every expression, which may present reasonable ground of offence to those, who differ from Congregationalists on the questions here discussed. The cause of truth is not promoted by harsh or flippant words, or by charges such as that of complicity with ritualism, or any others, which, whether well founded or not, might with advantage be replaced by lucid explanations and sound arguments.

The present work is not written for the purpose of controversy, but in order to assist in the religious education of the young, in those principles and usages which have, as we assuredly believe, the sanction of Holy Scripture. Accordingly, the writer's main reliance has been throughout, on Biblical evidence, which he has endeavoured, as far as possible, to present in a form suited to the class of readers to whom he addresses himself, though, at the expense, in some cases, of much of its force. His great difficulty has been to observe the just mean between a degree of brevity, which would have involved serious obscurity and omission, and a fulness of illustration, which would have enlarged the volume to an inconvenient size. However, such as it is, the work is commended to the blessing of God, in the earnest hope that it may in some degree subserve the purpose for which it has been written.

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MANUAL OF BAPTISM.

INTRODUCTION.

BAPTISM is an ordinance of the Christian faith, Divinely appointed, and intended to be perpetually observed in connection with the extension of Christianity in the world.

There are three questions to be considered in Christian baptism; these relate to the form of the external ceremony itself, or, in other words, the manner in which the rite is to be administered,—the Divine and religious purpose it was intended to subserve,—and the class or description of persons, who are eligible to receive it.

It is of some importance, as we shall see, to take up these three questions in the order in which we have stated them.

CHAPTER I.

THE MODE OF ADMINISTRATION.

THE baptismal rite is performed by placing the recipient, in some way or other, in contact with water, during the solemn pronunciation of the formula prescribed by our Lord in Matt. xxviii. 19. I baptize thee (or this person) "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This at least is the way in which the requirement of Christ in the above passage is carried out; though for the precise mode of applying it, we have neither precept nor example in the New Testament. The ceremony also has been generally accompanied, at least since the apostolic age, with words of scripture, exhortations, and prayers.

A difference of opinion has arisen within a few centuries past, and been the occasion of far more controversy than it is worth, in reference to the mode, in which the recipient of baptism should be subjected to contact with water. Some contend for the immersion of the whole person, others merely for the application

of water to the person by sprinkling or pouring. But as no one holding evangelical principles regards the water, as having any other than a merely emblematical value, this question, it should seem, might be safely referred for adjustment to considerations of convenience and decorum, especially if we remember the total disregard ever evinced by Christ and His apostles to all questions of outward form. We shall therefore dispatch this part of our subject as summarily as the probable requirements of the general reader will permit.

§ 1. The meaning of the original word.

Our word Baptize is the Anglicised *βάπτω* form of the Greek word *βαπτίζω*, which ^{and} *βαπτίζω*. again is a lengthened form of another Greek verb — *βάπτω*. Of these, the latter unquestionably means to dip, that is, to place under water, or any other liquid, for a short time; and this is in fact disputed by no one. The other Greek word, which corresponds directly to our English word baptize, is, as we observe, somewhat different in form; and this change of form is one which often occurs in the Greek language, and is also often attended with some change of meaning. If, therefore, *βάπτω* (Bapto) is the simple and primary verb, and has the meaning to dip, we might not unreasonably infer that

the secondary and modified verb, βαπτίζω (Baptizo), would in some way alter this meaning. Much reliance, indeed, is not to be placed upon considerations of this kind; but in the present instance we may claim to have at least a presumption in favour of the conclusion, that βαπτίζω primarily did not exactly mean to dip.

It is more important to inquire in what sense the word is generally used in classical Greek writers; but into this inquiry our limits will not permit us to enter. We can but give, and that very briefly, the results of the investigations of others.*

Classical usage. It appears, then, that in the view of ancient Greek writers, a thing might be dipped, and yet not baptized, and baptized, and yet not dipped,—that a shore or beach is baptized by a flood tide, in which case of course the water rolls over it, and the shore cannot be dipped into the water,—that a person bearing a heavy burden might be baptized by a small addition made to it,—and that he might be baptized with debts, with cares, or with taxes, in all which cases, the meaning of the Greek word cannot be to dip, but has rather that of sink, or be oppressed, or overwhelmed, by something pressing down upon from above. In fact, it is

* See Godwin's "Christian Baptism," pp 25-34.

said, that of all the passages in which the word occurs, there are only three, wherein the sense of immersing can be made out with any approach to strictness and certainty.

But granting, for the sake of argument, that the word in all ancient Words change in meaning.

classical usage has the meaning, and only the meaning, contended for by the Baptists, it would not thence follow, that it must retain this meaning in the sacred Greek writers of later times, when the language had in many respects greatly changed. Nothing is so liable to fluctuation as the significations of words; and, in truth, with the exception of such names as belong to the great objects of nature, such as the sun, the moon, the sea, and others of a similar kind, there are very few which keep to the same signification from age to age. Most of all are changes of this kind observable in words denoting social customs, legal or religious ceremonies, which often begin with an individual meaning, and acquire by degrees one that is merely formal or technical, the particular action which they originally expressed having been long entirely replaced by some other. We have an instance of this in the common Hebraistic phrase, "to cut a covenant," which probably originated in the custom of slaying and cutting

animals in pieces, as we see in Genesis xv. 10, for the purpose of ratifying or giving stability to the stipulations of the contract. The expression therefore at first, and for some time, literally pointed to such an action as performed by the covenanting parties. But the same phrase continued to be used long after this particular custom had passed away, and denoted only the making of a covenant. It acquired thus only a technical sense. Let the classical meaning of βαπτίζω Baptizo, therefore, have been what it may, our reliance must be mainly placed on the usage of the verb in sacred Greek, and particularly in connection with religious customs and institutions.

Sacred usage
of the word.

Now in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, made probably some two hundred years before the time of our Lord, and called the Septuagint, the word in question occurs twice.

2 Kings v. 14. In the first passage, Naaman, the Syrian leper, is said to have baptized himself seven times in the river Jordan, in obedience to the direction of the prophet Elisha. Now here, in the absence of all preconceptions of what the word means, the most natural thought would perhaps be, that Naaman just performed upon himself the Mosaic prescription

for leprosy, and, therefore, *sprinkled* rather than immersed himself seven times. Lev. xiv. 7.

The only bar in the way of this inference is that "*baptized*" is here the translation of a Hebrew verb, which, though primarily meaning to moisten or sprinkle, usually bears the signification to dip. It does not, however, necessarily imply a total immersion of the object. This is sometimes, when the word is used, in the nature of the case impracticable, Gen. xxxvii. 31. and in other cases is clearly not intended by the writer. We should, therefore, Exod. xii. 22. gather from the passage, that if Lev. ix. 9. the Syrian captain immersed at all, it was not his whole body, but only its diseased parts; though even the latter is not required by the direction of the prophet.

The word baptize occurs again in a Isa. xli. 4. passage, of which the sense is, "Transgression baptizes me." Considering, however, that the corresponding Hebrew word means to terrify, or to seize suddenly, the sense of "baptizes" in this case probably is, as most interpreters decide, "overwhelms" or "oppresses," which, as we have seen, is one of the classical meanings of the word.

Besides what is properly called the Usage in the Apocrypha. Septuagint, there are certain Apocry-

phal Greek writings, which, though not of any Divine authority, yet as being ancient, are often useful in helping us to ascertain the meaning of Greek words. Now, βαπτίζω (Baptizo) also occurs twice in these writings.

Judith xli. 7. In this book we read that Judith, a young and beautiful Jewish heroine, during an abode of three days in the camp of Holofernes, an Assyrian general, "was wont to go out each night into the valley of Bethulia, and to baptize herself *within the camp* at a fountain of water." That this baptism was a religious ceremony is indicated by the fact, that on these occasions, according to her own request (ver. 6), she went forth "to prayer."

Now, on *religious grounds*, considering that, according to all available testimony, the Jews were accustomed, in connection with such devotions, to apply water only to their hands,—on *grammatical grounds*, the baptism being *at* and not *into*, the fountain,—on *physical grounds*, remembering the size, construction, and use of fountains in general,—and finally, on *moral grounds*, considering the sex, youth, and beauty of Judith, and that these baptisms took place within the camp, necessarily exposed to the gaze of the soldiers, it appears to us *incredible*, that the word could have been intended to denote a total

immersion of the person. We find ourselves under the necessity of concluding, that whatever the Greek word may have signified originally, in this instance it meant no more than a partial application of water.

The other passage is in the book called Ecclesiasticus, and may be Chap. xxxiv. ver. 80. translated in the words, "One being baptized from (contact with) a dead body, and again touching it, what will he be advantaged by his washing?"

The reference here is so plainly to the Mosaic law of purification from uncleanness, supposed to be contracted by contact with a corpse, which enjoined only sprinkling, that no- Lev. xxii. 6. Num. xix. 11-18. thing more need be said. We add, that no evidence can be drawn from the Old Testament Scriptures, or from the writings of Philo or Josephus, that the practice of immersion was ever superadded in later times to the sprinklings commanded by Moses.

We now pass on to two or three New Testament usage. places, where the Greek verb, or words derived from it occur in the New Testament.

In one place reference is made to Heb. ix. 9. divers baptisings or washings which had formed part of the Mosaic ritual, imposed upon the observance of the Hebrew people until, what

the writer calls, "the time of reformation." No doubt he has directly in view the various rites of purification required by the law of Moses, as seen in Exod. xxix. 4, and xxx. 19; Num. viii. 7, and xix. 20. A careful examination of these places will show, that such baptizings consisted merely in washing the hands and the feet. But no words signifying immersion are to be found, nor does a dipping of the whole person into water appear ever to have been enjoined by Moses.

Luke xi. 38. We read in Luke, "But when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled, that He did not first *baptize* himself before dinner." As this baptism was something which, as a matter of course, every guest was expected to do before sitting down to dinner, it is very difficult to conceive of it as amounting to immersion of the whole person. If possibly a custom so inconvenient, irksome, and unnecessary could have been originated, it would soon have become impracticable to maintain it. It is vastly more likely, therefore, that Luke here intends to convey no more by the use of the word "*baptize*" than we find explicitly stated by Mark. "For the Pharisees and all
Chap. vii. ver. 8, 4. the Jews, unless they carefully wash their hands, do not eat, holding the tradition of the elders; and, come from the market, unless

they have baptized themselves, they do not eat." The words following, which speak of the baptizings of "copper vessels and couches," things not likely to be dipped into water, go entirely to confirm this interpretation. The Greek word here rendered "couches" may have no right to a place in the text; but even as an interpolation, if it be one, it shows that the Jews were wont to "*baptize*" articles of furniture, which could hardly have been totally immersed.

This conclusion, that the Jews' baptizings of themselves before meals, were not immersions, is confirmed by the usage referred to in Chap. ii. ver. 6. John. These waterpots, no doubt, were placed in readiness for the ceremony referred to by Luke and Mark as usual before meals. It may be allowed, indeed, that the quantity of water containable in each of these vessels—somewhere between seventeen and twenty-five gallons—was sufficient for the complete immersion of an ordinary man. But considering the shape of the vessels,* which were probably large jars or vases, and the number of guests likely to be present at such a feast, it is impossible that in six such vessels so many total immersions could have been made; whereas, a custom of sprinkling a little water

* The word sometimes means a common bucket or pail. John iv. 28.

upon the hands would occasion no inconvenience, and is more easily understood.

That the custom of the Jews in general was not to immerse themselves before their meals, is strikingly shown by a passage in Josephus. Speaking of the Jewish sect known as the *The Essenes*. Essenes, he says:—"After this every one of them is sent away by their curators to exercise some of these arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labour with diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. After this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down." (Jewish Wars. Bk. 2; ch. 8; § 2, 3, 4, 5. Whiston's translation.)

Now, although this passage has been most unaccountably quoted to prove a general Jewish custom of immersion before dinner, yet a very little consideration will show, that it tells just the other way. For Josephus is here describing the *peculiar* notions and practices of the Essenes, in distinction from the Jews in general, and

particularly from the Pharisees and Sadducees. Among these distinctive features, for example, he mentions their neglect of marriage, their contempt for riches, and the fact that they had a community of possessions, and abstained from the use of oil, as a defilement. In the same list of peculiarities he mentions this practice of bathing before dinner. But to state this as a thing peculiar to the Essenes, is only another way of affirming that other Jews had no such custom; and it would be just as logical to infer, from the special description of this one sect, that the *Pharisees* also had a contempt for riches and courted poverty, as that they bathed their bodies in cold water daily before dinner.

It thus becomes abundantly clear that Luke and Mark, in the above passages, use the word "baptize" in the sense of applying water to a small part of the body—probably only to the hands—instead of dipping the whole body into it. We have here, therefore, an evidence, which can hardly be resisted, that in the ordinary language of Palestine, in the days of our Lord, the word in question did not in its common use convey the idea of total immersion.

We are led to the same conclusion by a consideration of the usage of the New Testament in those cases where the

Matt. iii. 11.
Mark i. 8.
Luke iii. 16.
John i. 26.

verb to baptize is joined with the substantive, water. The meaning is well expressed by the words, — “to baptize with water;” and this rendering is retained in the same passages by the late Dean Alford in his revised translation of the New Testament. This construction plainly points to the water as the means or instrument by which the baptism is effected, and indicates an application of it to the person, *not* an immersion into it. To convey the latter idea, we should require a construction of the verb and noun, which would yield the phrase, — “to baptize *into* water,” which does not occur at all in the New Testament, though actually and invariably employed by classical writers, whenever they unquestionably intend to express the idea of immersion.

Baptism with
the Spirit. Closely connected with this is the kindred construction of the same verb when used to denote the reception of the Holy Spirit, or of His gifts and influences, which is termed the being baptized *with* the Holy Spirit. Here also we have the same construction of the verb and its connected noun. Believers are said to be baptized *with*, but never *into*, the Holy Spirit. The phraseology of course is figurative; but in the use of figures, and especially of a metaphor, as here, some degree of likeness and

congruity is always observed between the two things which are compared. No one accustomed to use the word "dip" in its literal sense would ever think of applying it figuratively to denote an action which had no conceivable resemblance to dipping. If, therefore, the phrase, "baptize with water," was really felt to convey the idea of an immersion into water, such a phrase as "baptizing with the Holy Spirit" could hardly by possibility have come into use, so unnatural and incongruous is the idea of dipping a person into the Holy Spirit. Not only so, but the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, and of His gracious influences, is ever represented in Scripture under a very different and more natural metaphor, of "pouring out," or "sprinkling upon," or "shedding forth," or "falling upon," as in the passages here referred to. But if, manifestly, baptizing with the Spirit cannot be dipping a soul into the Spirit, it must be equally clear, that baptizing with water is not dipping a person bodily into water.

It would thus appear that the word "baptize" had, in our Lord's day, much more probably the sense of "sprinkle" or "pour" than that of "immerse." Not that we contend for either of the two former meanings to the exclusion of

Psa. li. 7.
Joel ii. 28, 29.
Isa. lii. 15.
Ez. xxxvi. 25-27.
Zech. xii. 10
Acts ii. 17, 18,
33, and x.
44, 45.

the third. It is more likely that, for the purpose of real or ceremonial cleansings, the word had acquired a generic sense of applying water to the object in any way, which, by being most convenient, had become customary. Thus in domestic washings, some articles of furniture would be baptized in one mode, others in a different one, according to their several natures. This was actually the case, as we have seen, with those Jewish personal baptisms in general which preceded the sitting down to meals, the single exception being those of the Essenes, as described by Josephus, an exception which clearly proves the rule. To use Dr. Beecher's illustration, it is just as if a servant received from his master the general command to go on business to a particular place, including no directions as to any specific mode of going, whether by walking or riding, or in any other way. The servant would naturally determine the mode of fulfilling his master's orders according to the nature of the case. If the place were distant only by two or three hundred yards, he would naturally walk; if it were several miles off, he would as naturally ride or take a public conveyance, if there were one available. So to baptize, in the common use of the word, and especially in connection with

religious purifications, would naturally be to apply water to the object in the most convenient manner. This determination of the actual meaning of the word, whatever may have been its original meaning, is in accordance both with the facts of the New Testament and with the nature of things. Throughout Christendom at the present time, the word commonly bears this meaning, as applied to the ordinance of baptism, and has undeniably borne it for many centuries.

§. 2. Mode of Christian baptism during the earliest ages.

If the conclusion we have reached as to the actual meaning of the word "baptize," in the first century, be correct, it will follow that the baptisms administered in apostolic times and onwards, may have taken any one of the three forms we have indicated, or sometimes one and sometimes another, according to circumstances. A careful consideration of the descriptions given of them will confirm this view.

We commence with the recorded baptisms of John, both because of the John's baptisms. analogy of his circumstances, as a baptizer, with those of the apostles, and because his modes of administration would naturally set a precedent for those who followed him. Now,

whatever may have been the precise mode of baptizing with which John commenced his ministry, there are many reasons for the belief that it did not consist uniformly in dipping the whole person into water.

(1) The very designation by which he was distinguished, John the Baptist, or Baptizer, sounds far more like an official title or distinction, denoting generically the administrant of a religious ordinance, irrespectively of mode, than as a performer of a specific and very common kind of action. In one case it is John the Baptist, as we understand the phrase, an honourable religious distinction; in the other it is John the Dipper, which sounds like a burlesque of his sacred mission and office, and could hardly have been applied to him by the Evangelists, and by Christ Himself, as we know it was.

John's description of his own baptism. (2) John himself, in describing his baptism, uses those phrases which, as we have seen (p. 14), indicate rather the application of water than an immersion into it.

"I indeed have baptized you *with water*, but

Mark i. 8. He shall baptize you *with the Holy Spirit.*" And again—"He shall baptize you

Matt. iii. 11. *with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.*"

These expressions, as we have seen, whether

they referred to water or Spirit baptisms; accord much more with the modes of sprinkling or pouring than with that of dipping; and it is difficult to believe that one, who so described the two baptisms, could have rigorously insisted in all cases on immersing his disciples.

(3) The fact that such immense numbers of persons were baptized by John, would render a uniform practice of immersion almost an impossibility. It is said that "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Matt. III. 5. Jordan" were baptized by him. Not to take these expressions literally, they must at least indicate, that vast multitudes of persons were baptized by John; and considering the brief duration of his ministry before the baptism of Jesus, it is difficult to understand, if in all cases baptizing was immersing, how so much working in water could have been got through in the time, with anything like the dignity and decorum befitting a religious ordinance. When we add to this that the baptisms of John were performed in public, on persons of both sexes, and apparently in an inclement season of the year, and while in many cases far from their homes, the mind almost necessarily breaks away from the notion of total immersion, to some simpler and more facile mode of administration.

That John preferred to perform his baptisms in the vicinity of the Jordan, or "in Ænon, John iii. 23. near to Salem, because there was much water" (or more correctly, many waters, springs, or fountains, as the name Ænon implies) "there," is easily to be accounted for, independently of any mode in which he baptized. Multitudes coming from afar would require an abundant supply of water for other purposes besides baptism. Granting, therefore, for the sake of argument, that John set out in his ministry with immersion, granting even, that in special cases, as in that of Jesus, he may have adhered to it, a candid and entire consideration of the account of his baptisms, taken in connection with all the circumstances of his position, should lead, as it appears to us, to the conclusion, that the immersion of each disciple could not have been his invariable practice.

John iv. 1. Christ, through the medium of His disciples, baptised larger numbers even than John, and therefore we might not unfairly draw the same conclusion in His case as to the mode often, if not generally adopted. Certain it is, that we find also the same expressions in relation to Christian baptisms as in those of John, such as "baptizing *with* water," and "*with* the Holy Spirit," which are not indica-

Acts i. 5, or
xi. 16.

tive of immersion. It is also significant enough to be considered, that throughout the four Gospels and the Acts, in which nearly all the baptisms recorded in the New Testament are to be found, the sacred historian has never once descended to anything, which can be called a description, or even the briefest statement, of *how* baptism was administered in any one case. This is just what we might have anticipated from that practical disregard to external forms, which is so characteristic of the Saviour and His apostles, and which is incompatible with a rigorous insistence on any one mode, whether it be dipping or sprinkling, as alone constituting baptism.

Proceeding to particular instances, Acts ii. 41. it appears that three thousand persons were baptized on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem. But the immersion of so many persons within so brief a time, in a city "so scantily supplied," as Dean Alford says, "with water as Jerusalem," if within the limits of possibility, must appear to every unbiassed mind extremely unlikely, on the score of difficulty, inconvenience, and danger. The circumstances under which the Acts viii. 36, 38. Ethiopian statesman was baptized, are strongly suggestive of an easier mode than a total immersion. The whole case goes to show that

baptism was something which a traveller riding along the public way in his private chariot, and anticipating no such event a short time before, might still without difficulty undergo, and at once resume his journey.

Acts ix. 18;
xxii. 16. The phraseology used in connection with the baptism of Paul tells in the same direction. He received the ordinance, as it would appear, immediately after a three days' fast, and before he partook of the food by which Acts xvi. 15. he was refreshed. The baptism also of the jailer at Philippi, with all his family, in the middle of the night, conveys the same impression, which there is nothing in any other recorded baptism to disturb.

An argument in favour of the practice of immersion by the apostles, has been founded on certain Pauline assertions, that believers are "buried with Christ by (or in) their baptism," in which a reference is supposed to be intended to water baptism, and if so, then to immersion, as the only mode which can resemble a burial. But as in these passages the apostle is manifestly speaking directly of a spiritual baptism, just as he speaks also of a spiritual crucifixion and circumcision, that is to say, of a work of regeneration wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, any expression or figure of speech

he may use in describing this work, can bear on the subject of water baptism only in the way of allusion. The spiritual state or action intended by the terms "buried with Him," and "risen with Him," may *conceivably* allude, in the way of assimilation, to the immersion of the person in the water of baptism and to the emergence again out of it; and assuming this allusion to have been designed, it has been inferred that immersion was the invariable mode of baptism. At most, however, even accepting these assumptions, it could hardly prove more than that immersion was the *general* practice, not that it was rigorously invariable, in defiance of all considerations of convenience, health, and decorum. But observe the matter more particularly.

There are two grounds on which it might be maintained, that the apostle here uses a metaphor founded on the analogy of immersion in water with a burial in the earth.

First.—'That the analogy is very real and obvious, and consequently the metaphor intelligible and apposite.' But if it be remembered, that in the Jewish mode of burial the corpse was not let down into the earth, as with us, but thrust into a chamber hewn out of a rock by the side of a hill, or that at least this was the mode in which Christ was buried, the figure will not

appear remarkably exact or congruous. Still less is there any but the most fanciful analogy between the rising of an immersed person from the water and the resurrection of the spiritual body from the grave, whether in the instance of the rising Saviour or of any of His saints. When we "sow" the natural body in weakness, corruption, and dishonour, we are expressly taught by the same apostle, through the medium of a better analogy, that we are *not* sowing "the body that shall be," the body that *shall* be raised in power and glory. The body of the resurrection, spiritual in its nature, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the risen Saviour, will be totally unlike the rising of the same gross body, wet and dripping with the water, into which it has just been dipped. The figure must therefore be condemned as wholly inappropriate to the nature of the subject, and even in its effect misleading.

Secondly.—'That the figure cannot otherwise be explained, so as to yield a suitable sense, than by supposing it founded on the analogy of immersion in water to a burial in the earth.' But conceding this point, for the sake of argument, what is the sense conveyed by the metaphor? Granting that the apostle intentionally alludes to immersion, and constructs a metaphor on this

basis, what is the particular *spiritual* act or state of soul which he has in view, when he says that believers are buried with Christ in (spiritual) baptism?

In the apostle's view, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ present in emblem the death, and the final putting away, from all connection with us, of our guilty and sinful human nature (that which he elsewhere calls Rom. vi. 6. "the old man", and "the body of sin"), as well as the rising of a new spiritual human nature conformed to the spiritual humanity of the Saviour. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, in other words, His working in the souls of believers, converts these emblems into spiritual realities. Our sinful nature receives from Him its death wound; and though like the crucifixion of a living body, with which it is aptly compared, it is a slow and lingering death, yet it may be regarded as *dead*, being destined to this issue, to which also it is gradually approximating. In the same sense the sinful humanity may be said to be buried in conformity to the burial of Christ, in so far as it is put out of connection with us, hidden away from our sight, as the body will eventually be in the grave. Burial is the consummation of death, which is not attained until that which is dead is finally

removed from us. It is, moreover, the necessary condition of a resurrection of the soul to a new and divine life in correspondence with the resurrection of Christ. No one in the New Testament is ever said to be raised from the dead, save one, who has not only died but also been buried; and as the body of Christ, which rose from the tomb, was not the body which was buried in it, but a new spiritual and glorious body into which it was transformed, so the body of our sin is raised no more; but a new spiritual human nature, fashioned like unto the glorified humanity of Christ, shall ascend into immortal union and fellowship with Him.

These spiritual states in the souls of true Christians, created and carried onwards, each towards its complete realisation, by the Spirit of God, receive no elucidation from any imaginary analogy with the immersion of a body in water. Not only are they perfectly intelligible without reference to it, but the importation of such a metaphor has no other effect than to perplex and obscure the whole subject. When to this it is added that, save in these two passages from Paul's epistles, there is not so much as a hint in any part of the New Testament, that water baptism was ever intended to be a dramatic exhibition of the death, burial,

and resurrection of Christ, as in some sense repeated in believers, and that even in these two passages we have it *at most* but indirectly intimated in a doubtful figure of speech, it is at once manifest how little there is here to commend immersion, as alone constituting Christian baptism.

If we just glance at the times subsequent to those of the apostles, we find at once reason for the admission that, as far as we can gather from vague and scanty references to the subject in ecclesiastical writers, immersion was generally adopted in the course of the second and third centuries, at least where it was easily practicable. But then it must be remembered that, towards the close of the second century, not only immersion, but a trine immersion, became general, that is, a dipping of the person three times, with reference probably to the three subsistents in the sacred Trinity, as well as various anointings, investiture with white raiment, and the exhibition of milk and honey, things, which no one will now contend for, as sanctioned by the apostles. In such customs, a general practice in the third century cannot prove prevalence in the first, for outward forms, like ill weeds, grow apace. Rather, as so much was confessedly superadded to the simplicity of

earlier usages, in order to render the ceremony more imposing, it cannot be considered improbable, to say the least, that the more rigorous practice of immersion, in later times, was due to the same cause.

But evidence is not wanting to show that even in these said later times immersion was by no means the only mode of baptism.* We hear of affusions and circumfusions, as well as of immersions. In these more convenient forms people were occasionally baptized on the sick bed, and at the point of death. The promise in Ezekiel before cited, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," is referred to as amounting to baptism, as also are the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal lamb with a bunch of hyssop, the sprinkling of the leper by the Jewish priest, the pouring of water upon the wood of the sacrifice, and the falling of rain from heaven; all which applications of the term abundantly show, that though baptizing may have been in most cases performed by dipping, yet this did not exclude valid baptism in other modes.

In closing this section of our subject, we ask the reader candidly to consider the facts and arguments we have presented to him, and to

* Dr. Halley. Congregational Lecture 6.

bear in mind that our contention is, not for a rigorous practice of sprinkling or pouring in opposition to that of immersion, but for the application of the water to the person in any way which convenience or decorum may dictate, and that, whichever of the modes may be adopted, the external baptism itself is equally proper and admissible.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

WE now enter upon the second general division of our subject, and proceed to inquire into the reasons for which the ordinance of baptism was Divinely instituted; or, in other words, the objects it was intended to promote in the case of the person baptized, and in connection with the extension of Christianity. This inquiry really enters into the very essence of baptism, as a Christian institution; and if only we and our Baptist friends could arrive at the same conclusion here, every other matter in dispute would soon adjust itself.

Baptism of the Spirit. There are two baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, having to do more or less with the diffusion of the Gospel, namely—baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Spirit. What the first of these is, as to its form and mode, we have already seen; what the second is, may be briefly explained. It was promised to the true disciples of Christ, and was to take effect soon after His ascension

to heaven. This promise was fulfilled to those disciples on the day of Pente- Acts i. 4, 5.
cost; and the fulfilment continued, under the preaching of the Gospel, in the case of all who really surrendered themselves in faith Acts x. 44, 45.
to the Saviour. Ibid. xi. 15-18.

This baptism of the Spirit was sometimes attended with supernatural demonstrations, as in the instance just referred to; but these were in pursuance of special purposes, as, for example, to furnish evidence of the truth, or to manifest the Divine approval, when this would have been called in question; they formed no part of its essential nature. Nothing of the kind appears in the Church at Jerusalem under the preaching of the apostles, nor in Samaria, in connection with the mission of Peter and John. Acts viii. 14-17.

This higher baptism essentially consisted in the entrance of the light and power of the Holy Ghost into the soul of a true convert, making known the forgiveness of sin, working a change of heart, imparting spiritual life, and, in a word, bringing about that state of soul which is *generally* denoted by the word regeneration.

A broad distinction is to be made Conversion and Regeneration.
between conversion and regeneration; though, in our ordinary religious discourse,

the two words are used indifferently, as just meaning the same thing. But in the teaching of the apostles, conversion is the soul's return to God by repentance and faith in Christ,—a moral and religious change of conviction and conduct, which, under the preaching of the Gospel, is demanded of every man as the condition of his salvation; whereas regeneration is the salvation itself, in its primary stage, and is in its nature and origin Divine and spiritual. Hence it is termed the new birth, and the being

John iii. 8-8. born of the Spirit, or of God. This is
 1 Pet. i. 23.
 1 John iii. 9. the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and its result is the regeneration of the soul.

Relation of the
 two Baptisms.

Now in reference to these two baptisms, no one, with whom we have at present to do, will dispute, that they were intended to stand in some definite mutual relation; and the only question is, in what relation? *Three* different relations are severally possible, which we may distinguish as present, past, or future; or, to use Mr. Godwin's words, water baptism may be regarded as either a *means*, or as a *sign*, or as an *emblem*, of the Spirit baptism. To explain our meaning, we observe:—

Water Baptism
 a means of
 Spirit Bap-
 tism.

1. Whenever properly administered, and by duly authorised persons, the external baptism may be the *means*

of producing the inward baptism, or at least the occasion on which, by Divine power, it immediately ensues, so that the recipient of the one becomes *ipso facto* the subject of the other. This is the view held by the Romanists, and, possibly with some modifications, by the Anglican, and some other so-called reformed Churches. We shall refer to it briefly, as the Romanist theory.

2. Or baptism with water may be re-
garded as a *sign*, that, in the recipient
of it, the Spirit baptism has already some time
before taken place; and his reception of it, as
his own free act, is a public profession of regeneration, which is accepted, if not in some sense accredited, by the administrator. This is the view generally held, we believe, by the modern Baptists.

Water Baptism
a sign of Spirit
Baptism.

3. The external baptism may be
regarded as an *emblem* of the inner
baptism, or, in other words, as symbolically
pointing to the Divine provision and promise of
it, on the recipient's compliance eventually with
its appointed conditions. This is the view taken
of the ordinance by the Congregationalists and
by many others.

Water Baptism
an emblem of
Spirit Baptism.

Each of these theories of the nature
of the baptismal rite is followed by its

Sequences of
these theories.

corresponding sequence. In the case of the Romanist, the recipient is supposed to be brought, by the mere act of the operator, into the true Church of Christ, and becomes entitled to its privileges. In that of the Baptist, the recipient professes, and is declared, to have come some time before, by compliance with the terms of the Gospel, into the Church of Christ, and is consequently admissible to the privileges of Church fellowship on earth. In that of the Congregationalist, the recipient is formally placed in an external connection with the Church of Christ, as a disciple or learner of Christian truth, and is supposed to come under religious instruction and discipline, with a view to his eventual conversion and regeneration, after which he will be admissible to Church fellowship.

Appeal to the New Testament. We have now to bring each of these theories in succession to the bar of the New Testament, and to test them by the teaching and precedents of the apostolic age.

§ 1. The Romanist theory tested.

Romanist theory tested. The administration of baptism is not the *means* of producing, nor is it immediately followed by, regeneration; in other words, the baptism of the Holy Spirit neither accompanies, nor follows, nor is in any way dependent on, the mere act of the administrator, whoever he may be.

Here we ask the reader to bear distinctly in mind the sense, in which we use the expressions, regeneration and Spirit-baptism. If the Romanist or Anglican chooses to take either of these terms in a sense of his own, or to explain regeneration as consisting simply in a change of federal relation, or any other change which is foreign to the Scriptures, or incapable of being definitely stated, we care not to dispute with him on any such basis. We have in view only that vital and spiritual change, which is referred to in such places as Romans viii. 9, 14, and 2 Corinthians v. 17. Any other notion of regeneration is not worth contending for.

Now there is a very strong antecedent presumption against the supposition, Antecedent presumption. that regeneration, in our sense of the word, has been left to depend on any external and official act. To be able to give the blessings of spiritual life and Divine sonship is a stupendous function to entrust to any man on behalf of others. It would be, as if our Lord should give away His power to save sinners,—as if He should take the brightest of His many crowns from His own head, and place it on the head of a servant. This would be something totally at variance with the uniform procedure of God in all former ages. He has never given His almightiness to any man

to play with, or placed His creative energies at the disposal of Prophet or Priest. We see too much every day of the prostitution of the highest natural gifts to unworthy purposes, to believe that God would ever trust men with those, which are supernatural and Divine. Besides, the idea that the Holy Spirit reserves His own baptism until the precise moment, when a self-constituted priest chooses to baptize with water, imposes a limitation upon His inscrutable operations, which is utterly incompatible with all, that is revealed to us of His sovereign freedom and His infinite perfection.

John iii. 8;
1 Cor. xii. 11.

Nothing can render such a position credible to any sound mind, except the plainest and most explicit teaching of Holy Scripture. But observe:—

No Scriptures
support the
Romanist
theory.

1. There are no passages in the New Testament, which afford any support to the baptismal theory of the Romanist. In order to show this, we will take two of the passages which are most commonly cited in proof, and briefly examine them.

John iii. 5. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Here it is by no means certain, or rather it

is very improbable, that our Lord refers to the subject of water baptism at all. There is nothing in the discourse, as a whole, to indicate such a reference: the phrase, "born of water," is not a natural description of the baptismal rite, and is nowhere else applied to it in Scripture. It is, moreover, entirely foreign to our Lord's general teaching and manner to give such prominence to an outward form in connection with spiritual things.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that our Lord has external baptism in view. All that His words import is, that both baptisms, that with water and that of the Spirit, are conditions of admission into the kingdom of God. It is clearly not said, or so much as hinted, that these two baptisms are necessarily, or in any case, simultaneous, or, that whenever the former is properly administered, it is immediately followed by the latter.

Nay, the words could not possibly, on Tractarian principles themselves, convey this meaning to Nicodemus. No regeneration, it is admitted, took place in any case until the day of Pentecost. Supposing, therefore, that Nicodemus had undergone the ceremony of baptism shortly after this interview with Christ, an interval of at least a year or two must have

elapsed before he would have received the baptism of the Spirit, and become the subject of regeneration. How then can these words convey a meaning to us, which they could not, in the nature of things, have conveyed to him? On what principle of interpretation is it possible, to deduce from them the inseparable union of two things, which, in the most favourable view of Nicodemus, would in his own case have been actually separated by months, and probably by years?

Titus iii. 4-6. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we did, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Here the apostle and his brethren are said to have been saved by the washing or laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Admitting, that these words contain an allusion to water baptism, a regular connection of this with regeneration, either in nature or time, is surely neither asserted nor implied. The phrase—"laver (or font) of regeneration,"—necessarily conveys no more than the emblematic significance of the baptismal

affusion or immersion, as pointing to that Divine effusion of spiritual influence, which is provided for the real believer in Christ. It is, as Alford says, "the laver belonging to, pertaining to, or setting forth regeneration;" *not* the laver producing it, or inseparably united with it in actual concurrence.

If these two passages, so often appealed to, fail to yield even the shadow of support to the position in question, it is scarcely necessary to consider such places as 1 Corinthians 1 Cor. xii. 13; xii. 13; Romans vi. 3; Colossians Rom. vi. 8; ii. 12; Ephesians iv. 5; and others Col. ii. 12; of a similar kind, so manifestly do they relate Ephes. iv. 5. only to the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the only baptism to which the apostles attached much importance.

2. The facts of the apostolic history afford no support to the theory of baptismal regeneration. Not supported by apostolic facts.

In the experience of those to whom the Gospel was first preached, no constant or regular connection in time appears between the water and the Spirit baptisms. Of most of the apostles themselves, we do not certainly know whether they were ever baptized with water; and even supposing them all to have undergone this lower baptism, years must have elapsed before they

received the higher. In some cases certainly, in others most probably, baptism with water was *never* followed by the effusion of the Holy Spirit. We refer to such cases as those of Simon Magus, Ananias and Sapphira. Others, again, who became the subjects of both baptisms, were in some cases baptized with water first, and with the Spirit afterwards; while in others this order of things was reversed. No necessary connection, therefore, is found between them; either may precede or follow the other; and the antecedence of the one is no guarantee for the sequence of the other. How, then, can any one presume to place in inseparable union, what God Himself has thus put asunder?

Contradicted
by the condi-
tions of rege-
neration.

3. The position of the Romanist is directly contradicted by the regular conditions of regeneration, as explicitly given in the New Testament.

These conditions are, repentance and faith,—“repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;” in a word, true conversion to God. This the Apostle Paul made it his life’s work to testify both to Jews and Greeks, as indeed it constituted his apostolic mission to the world. The same is equally true of the ministry of the other apostles, and of our Lord Himself. It was fitting,

Acts xi. 21;
xxvi. 17, 18.

for reasons which will come before us hereafter, that converts should submit to the ordinance of water baptism; but the baptism of the Holy Spirit is never promised except on the above terms, which in their own nature are essentially different from a mere outward and ceremonial observance. The reader will find abundant evidence of this in the following passages, which we recommend to his earnest attention:—Matt. xviii. 8; Luke xiii. 3; John vii. 37-39; Acts iii. 19; xi. 15-17; and xix. 1-6; Gal. iii. 2, 14; Eph. i. 13.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, appears scarcely to re-
Paul forgets his baptizings. 1 Cor. i. 14-17.
 member how many persons he had baptized at Corinth. But if such a stupendous consequence, as the regeneration of the soul, had waited on his administration of the baptismal rite, could he possibly have forgotten the instances, in which he had been the means of conveying this priceless treasure? But, what is stranger still, and on the Romanist theory inexplicable, he declares that Christ had sent him “not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;” and he even seems to speak as if preaching were more important work than baptizing, and thanks God, that he had not baptized more. But how could this be, if all His baptizings were

accompanied by the baptism of the Holy Spirit ? Preaching might often fail, but such baptizings would always be a success. Even Paul's preaching was *generally* "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness ;" but his *baptizings*, if the Romanist is right, would be always "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The only explanation of these facts is, that Paul knew nothing of baptismal regeneration. This appears to us to have all the certitude of demonstration from his own words, in the Chap. i. 15. same epistle, in which he affirms that he had been the spiritual father of many of those Corinthian Christians, not through the medium of water baptism, but by the gospel which HE HAD PREACHED.

It is some confirmation of our position, as against the Romanist, that the actual administrant of water baptism is almost invariably overlooked in each case by the sacred historian, or placed, as it were, in the shade, as a person of no consideration. In the Roman and high Anglican communions, he is invested with an awful power, which exalts him greatly above mere laymen ; and hence care is very properly taken, that he is duly authorised, and really belongs to the privileged caste. But if the reader will examine the baptisms recorded in

the Acts, he will find himself unable strictly to make out, in any case, with the single exception of the Ethiopian's, who the baptizer really was. In all other cases, we read that persons were *baptized*, but who baptized them, the sacred writer does not care to inform us. To say the least, this is not favourable to lofty priestly pretensions.

From these facts and considerations, *Conclusion.* to which many others might be added, the conclusion is inevitable, that baptismal regeneration has no standing ground in the New Testament, but is rather in direct opposition to all its teachings. We cannot wonder, therefore, that Romanists, and those who, in this and some other points, concur with them in religious belief, are inclined to seek a justification of their theory rather in the writings of ancient Ecclesiasts, than in those of the apostles. But, how uncertain and dubious any evidence is, which can be fairly drawn from the Fathers of the first two or three centuries, taken as a whole, may be seen in the works of Professor Godwin and Dr. Halley, to which I have referred.

§ 2. The Baptist theory tested.

Water baptism, according to the New Testament, does not presuppose the precurrence, in the recipient, of the Spirit baptism, nor neces-

sarily imply any profession of an antecedent regeneration.

We shall endeavour to adduce proof of this proposition under the following heads :—

Regeneration
nowhere ex-
pressly re-
quired for
baptism.

1. Evidence or profession of regeneration is nowhere made a condition of water baptism.

The position of the Baptists is thus stated by Dr. Carson :—"Baptism is a figure of washing away sins with respect to those who are already washed;" and this statement of their views would, we believe, be generally accepted by the members of the Baptist body.* There ought, therefore, to be at least some passages in the apostolic writings, wherein evidence, or at least profession, of the previous washing away of sin or regeneration, is laid down as a condition for receiving baptism. We ask our Baptist brethren to produce one such passage.

Acts viii. 37. They will hardly respond to this appeal by pointing us to Acts viii. 37, because they know, as well as we do, that this passage is spurious, and, therefore, no part of the word of God. This is not the place to adduce the evidence, which has led Tischendorf, and Tregelles, and other editors of the Greek Testament,

* "In the case of the believer, baptism is administered in the belief that he is already regenerated."—*Dr. Landels*.

to eject it from the text. The greatest New Testament critic in this country, Dr. Tregelles, believes, that the words here put into the mouth of Philip and the Eunuch, were not in existence until the fifth century, and that they originally crept into the text out of some baptismal liturgy.

But even supposing the passage to be genuine, it would not in any degree sustain the position in question. For, believing with all the heart, or, in other words, a sincere and unreserved trust in Jesus Christ, so far from involving the actual experience of regeneration, is, as the whole tenour of the New Testament shows, the antecedent condition on which alone regeneration is bestowed.

Acts iii. 19.

Appeal, however, has been made to the great Commission,—“Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” Some Baptists interpret these words to mean,—“Make disciples from among all nations, and baptize those, whom you have previously made disciples, in the name of the Father,” &c.

Matt. xxviii.
19, 20.

For the sake of argument, we will, in the first place, accept this interpretation. But what are disciples? The word primarily means a learner,

one who comes regularly under the instruction of another. In this sense the term is applied to the nominal followers of John the Baptist, and afterwards to those who were in a similar manner followers of Jesus. What sort of disciples, in many cases, they were, may be inferred from John vi. 66.

John viii. 30-33. But there were disciples and disciples. Our Lord himself distinguishes, even among those who are said to have believed on Him, between nominal and real disciples, the latter being such as continued in His word, came to know the truth, and were made free by it. In later times, as seen in the Acts, the term disciples may have been applied to bodies of believers, though even then, sometimes given to those, who had not Acts xix. 1-6. received the Spirit baptism.

Now the question is, in which of these two senses the word disciple is to be understood in the Saviour's commission to His apostles. It is certainly contrary both to the nature of the case and to the usage of the New Testament, to suppose Him commissioning them to go forth and *regenerate*, either nations or individual men and women; because the bestowment of the Spirit, on whose presence and power all regeneration must depend, is His own sovereign prerogative, which cannot be delegated to His servants; and

this gracious bestowment and dispensation of the Holy Spirit! is no doubt included in the promise,—“Lo I am with you alway, even, &c.” It is more natural to understand the Saviour, as here directing His servants, so to labour in the preaching of the Gospel, as to induce in their hearers that moral and religious change which is called, in the New Testament, conversion, and to bring them under special teaching with a view to their salvation. But so interpreted, the passage gives no countenance to the position of the Baptists, in requiring evidence of regeneration in the candidates for water baptism.

But, we cannot accept it as the grammatical sense of the Saviour's commission, that the apostles were first to disciple, and then to baptize the disciples so made. The sense is rather, that they were to disciple by baptizing and teaching. The reception of baptism itself formally enrolled those, who received it, in the society of learners of Christian truth, with a view to their subsequent compliance with those terms of the Gospel, on which spiritual life essentially depends. But more of this hereafter.

The appeal of our Baptist friends Mark xvi. 16. may finally be carried to Mark xvi. 16, which, in their interest, we will consent to deal with as a component part of the second Gospel. The words

are,—“He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” But here, it will be observed, we have a setting forth of the terms, not of external baptism, but of salvation, in reference to which, both baptism and faith are apparently conditions, though, as the last clause of the verse shows, not in the same sense or degree of stringency. While, however, it is thus intimated that both baptism and faith are in some sense requisite to salvation, the passage does not state the conditions of baptism; much less does it declare or imply that faith must needs precede baptism, and much less still, such a faith in Christ, as actually involves the experience of regeneration. We may as fairly infer from the words, that baptism must precede faith, as that faith must precede baptism.

Suppose the terms of admission to a literary Institute were couched in the following sentence:—“He who pays the required fee and presents a certain certificate of recommendation, shall be admitted a member.” Would this imply that either of these two conditions *must* be fulfilled before the other?

Of course we proceed on the assumption, that no one will argue, from the mere order in which the two words, “believeth” and “baptized,” stand

in the passage, to the conclusion that because believing is put first, it must precede baptism. For by the same rule we might equally infer from Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, that baptizing must precede teaching. But even allowing, that the order in which the two words stand, as well as the nature of the case itself, indicates that a belief of some kind would furnish the only motive to receive baptism at all, and that some such belief must be presupposed, surely no one can affirm, with any pretension to candour, that any such condition as an antecedent Spirit baptism or regeneration is at all even "*implied*," not to say, "*expressed*." Our Baptist friends sometimes refer, Rom. vi. 8-7; Col. ii. 10-13. in support of their views, to two other passages before noticed; though it is difficult to see how these can serve their purpose, as to the conditions of water baptism. For, not to mention that the baptism in this case is the Spirit baptism, that is to say, the spiritual change wrought in the souls of believers, including its objects and its issues (otherwise the apostle's reasoning has neither consistency nor force), just as the crucifixion and the circumcision referred to are in their nature spiritual, the thing to be proved is, that this gracious Divine work in the soul must *precede* and *condition* the administration of the outward

baptism. It is just on this point that the passages say nothing, one way or the other; and, all that they do say, is just as compatible with the doctrine, which makes water baptism an *emblem* of a Divine provision for regeneration, as with that, which regards it as the *sign* of a regeneration already effected.

The New Testament baptisms not conditioned by regeneration. 2. The baptisms actually recorded in the New Testament, exclude the supposition of an antecedent regeneration, as their condition. In none of these does there appear any examination of candidates for baptism, nor any of that delay in administering the rite, which is so common in Baptist Churches. In some cases, indeed, such an examination was impracticable, as in that of the three thousand baptized, as we must suppose, on the day of Pentecost, and probably in the case of the baptisms in Samaria. But even with single persons no probation is ever required, no course of instruction and discipline, like that of the catechumens in later ages. Simon Magus, for example, could not have passed the mildest ordeal of this kind; for, not to speak of his inveterate habits of imposture, his crass ignorance of religious principles would alone have betrayed him. Take next the case of the jailer at Philippi, an ignorant

Acts ii. 41;
viii. 12.

Simon Magus.
Acts viii. 10-13.

The jailer at
Philippi. Acts
xvi. 24.

and brutal heathen, cruelly treating Paul and Silas; afterwards, alarmed by an earthquake, his first thought was to kill himself, supposing that his prisoners had fled. Reassured on this point, he obtains a light, brings out Paul and Silas, and, falling down before them, inquires,—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They direct him to trust in the Lord Jesus, and present the gospel to him and to his household. The next thing we hear of is that, in the words of the sacred historian, “*He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway.*” Here, conceding even the probability of a real and entire religious conversion in the jailer himself, it need hardly be added, that no living Baptist minister would have baptized *at once* either him or his in such circumstances. Similar conclusions are scarcely less justified by other cases of individual baptism, as that of the Ethiopian chamberlain, and that of Lydia and her household, in connection with

The Eunuch.
Acts viii. 27,
&c.; and Lydia,
xvi. 14, 15.

which there appears at least no examination or delay, such as now would be deemed necessary. We have already remarked on the facts recorded in Acts x. 44–48. The Spirit baptism was in this instance signalized by the accompaniment of miraculous gifts; and the whole

case is manifestly exceptional, as intended to indicate the Divine will, that the Gentiles should be admitted to baptism and discipleship on the same terms as the Jews. This is the Acts xi. 15-18. sense in which Peter afterwards explained the matter to the other apostles; and, in fact, this emphatic expression of God's will constituted his special ground of self vindication.

On fairly considering the recorded baptisms of the New Testament, if anything is clear, it is that the apostles did not administer baptism on the modern Baptist principle. Whatever may have been the conditions on which they *did* insist,—a question to be considered afterwards,—one thing, we submit, is certain,—they did not baptize on the condition of an antecedent Spirit baptism, or regeneration. But observe farther:—

Baptism expressly placed in a prospective relation to regeneration.

3. Baptism is expressly placed by the apostles, equally with repentance and faith, in a *prospective* relation to the effusion of the Holy Spirit, or regeneration.

This will appear from a consideration of the following passages:—

Acts ii. 38. “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, with a view to the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit." Here it will at once be observed, that both repentance and baptism are placed in the same prospective relation to the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that the sense is precisely given in the following analysis :—" Repent, with a view to the remission of your sins, and let every one of you be baptized, with a view to the remission of your sins ; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is possible, indeed, that persons may be found, who will say, " The remission of sins, as an object to be attained, is here exclusively, or at least more specially, connected with baptism in the name of Christ, than with repentance ;" but our Baptist friends will not take this position. They at least will allow, as readily as we, that without sincere repentance, no reception of water baptism, though a hundred times repeated, could secure the pardon of sin. But, be this as it may, it is manifest and undeniable, that baptism is represented here as something to be undergone with a view to the attainment of forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But this is in direct opposition to the Baptist theory, which we are considering. In fact, that theory requires, that Peter should have exhorted the people somewhat in this manner :—" Repent, with a view to the remission of

your sins ; and, when you can show, every one of you, to our satisfaction, that your sins have been remitted, and that you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, then come and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Such an exhortation as this from the lips of an inspired apostle, would meet the emergency of our Baptist brethren ; but, as it is unnecessary to add, this, or anything like it, *cannot* be drawn from the words of Peter.

The ordinance of baptism is placed in the same relation to the remission of sin, in the exhortation of Ananias addressed to Saul of Acts xxii. 16. Tarsus :— " And now, why tarriest thou ? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, having called upon the name of the Lord " (or, " upon His name ").

Baptists will perfectly agree with us in the position, that so far as we can be said to wash away our sins at all, it is not by submitting to any baptismal applications of water, but entirely through that exercise of faith and prayer, which is involved in calling upon the name of the Lord. This, moreover, is the plain teaching of the passage before us. The washing away of sin is in immediate connection with the appeal to the Saviour ; and, in fact, the words might be rendered,— " Call upon His name and wash away thy sins."

But so understood, the exhortation places the removal, or remission of sins, in the *future*, as a blessing to be attained, and makes the external rite point to this as an event depending on the fulfilment of the condition expressed in the words,—“calling upon His name.” Rom. x. 13.

This, however, is a very different sort of exhortation from any, which a Baptist minister would give to a candidate for baptism, whose previous history should bear the faintest resemblance to Saul's, even if he was perfectly free, as Ananias probably was, from doubt as to the thoroughness of his conversion. Its form would rather have been, as was long ago suggested by a Wesleyan minister, as the proper *Baptist* translation of the passage: “Now tarry awhile;—wash away thy sins, having called upon the name of the Lord; and then, come and be baptized.”

We are led directly to the same conclusion by a consideration of the following piece of sacred history:—

“And it came to pass, that while Acts xix. 1-6.
 Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus, and, finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, We did not so much as

hear whether there were any Holy Spirit. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe in Him, who should come after him, that is, on Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." (Alford's translation.)

Here it appears, that Paul at first assumed these disciples to be believers in Christ, and, under this impression, puts the question—"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit?" &c. In this question it is implied, that as believers in Christ, they ought, in the regular course of spiritual things, to have received, sooner or later, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and so to have come into the state of regeneration; though it was still very possible, that in the stage of religious progress at which he found them, this great event might not have yet taken place. Their reply, which in fact is to the effect, that no mention had been made to them at the time of their baptism, that this great promise of God had been in such a sense already fulfilled, as to place the Holy

Spirit within their reach, led to the further question,—“Unto what (or, with a view to what), then, were ye baptized?” It then transpired that they had received only John’s baptism, and were, as the whole case indicates, only *his* disciples. The apostle then preached the gospel to them; they received it, submitted to Christian baptism, and afterwards received that of the Spirit.

Now in all this, as it appears to us, two things come out very clearly :—(1) That had these disciples received Christian baptism at first, it would have been with a view to the following baptism of the Spirit, as the second inquiry of Paul implies; and (2) that they were actually baptized by, or under the sanction of, the apostle, *before* they received the Holy Spirit, and, as the whole case indicates, with a view to the attainment of this Divine gift. We find, therefore, here, equally as in the cases before examined, water baptism directly placed in a *prospective* relation to the Spirit baptism.

In conclusion, if the reader will now candidly consider the evidence we have presented to him under the three heads,—Regeneration is nowhere in the New Testament expressly, or by implication, made a condition of baptism,—The apostolic

Believer's baptism without support in the New Testament.

baptisms were not administered on this condition, and,—Water baptism is directly placed by the apostles in a *prospective* relation to Spirit baptism—he will, we believe, fully admit that the Baptist theory, or “Believer’s baptism,” as it is understood and practised by our brethren, must, equally with the Romanist theory, renounce all claim to the sanction of the Christian Scriptures.

§ 3. The Congregationalist theory tested.

The Congregationalist theory. Water baptism presents in emblem the Divine provision, made through Christ, for the regeneration of the souls of men, and presupposes the recipient to enter into some practical relation to Christian teachers, with a view to his eventual attainment of such regeneration.

If the external rite was intended to bear some definite relation to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and if of the three possible relations, two, as we have seen, must be set aside as having no Scriptural support, it follows at once that the third and only remaining relation must be accepted. If, considered in its essential nature and design, baptism is neither accompanied nor preceded by regeneration, it must be *followed* by it, in subjection of course to those terms of the Gospel, under which alone it is Divinely promised.

But our position is not merely a matter of inference, claiming to stand if the two other theories fall. It has the direct support of the New Testament, as we shall now endeavour to show more in detail.

1. We call attention again to the relation in which water baptism is directly placed by the apostles to the baptism of the Spirit, as something done with a view to it, as expressing, in symbolical language, the Divine provision for its attainment, leaving it to the Christian teacher to expound the conditions on which it is bestowed. Our view has thus the explicit sanction of the apostles. (See pp. 52-57.)

Water Baptism
in a prospective
relation to
Spirit Baptism.

2. We also briefly repeat our reference to the apostolic baptisms recorded in the New Testament. These, as we have seen, (pp. 50-52), were administered in circumstances where the examination of candidates was impossible, as to the multitudes on the day of Pentecost, and without any delay or attempt at examination in the case of individuals. On the contrary, single candidates were baptized immediately, in some instances, in which a very short catechism would have exposed gross ignorance or wickedness, and, in others, in perilous nearness to the brutal violence and suicidal disposition.

Apostolic Baptisms.

tions of heathenism. These facts are easily explicable from our point of view, but very difficult to explain from that of the Baptists; and they must be admitted to yield a very strong support to our general position. But observe:—

3. No conditions of baptism are anywhere formally stated in the New Testament. We have no object in denying that, as a matter of fact, those who sought baptism probably had in nearly all cases a belief of some sort in Christianity, and that this belief was often earnest and sincere. Still we look in vain for any explicit terms on which alone the ordinance was to be administered. Probably no such terms had been formally agreed upon among the leaders of the primitive Christians. Respect would naturally be paid to all indications of religious impression, under the preaching of the gospel, in the form either of feeling or of belief; but what signs of either would justify admission to baptism, where the hearer or inquirer desired to receive it, do not appear. The best, if not the only explanation of this fact is, that the Christian minister, in administering baptism, relied not so much upon the intrinsic character or value of a candidate's present feelings and convictions, as upon the prospect they afforded of his coming under regular instruction.

4. It does not appear to have entered into the essential nature or design of baptism, that it should include an open or public *profession* of Christian belief. There is nothing, indeed, in the nature of the ordinance to render public administrations of it improper, provided that they are conducted with decency, and in a manner fitted to convey right impressions of the gospel of Christ. Moreover, there is necessarily in public baptizings, much in the nature of a profession, on both sides, on that of the baptizer, as well as on that of the baptized. But we have yet to learn that it entered essentially into the primary design of baptism, to make an open profession of Christ before either the world or the Church. Nothing of this kind is stated in connection with the ordinance; and so far from any special care being taken to give notice of baptizings, they were often performed in private, and, once at least, in the hour of midnight. Where, Acts xvi. 33. considering the numbers baptized, publicity may have been unavoidable, we hear nothing of the presence of spectators, or of any efforts on the part of ministers to improve the occasion for the benefit of such witnesses. This could hardly have been entirely passed over in silence, if, in continuing the rite of baptism, it had been the special intention of our Lord, that, in undergoing

it, His servants should first *publicly* take up their cross and tell the world, that they had resolved to follow Him.

5. To administer water baptism was the function of the individual preacher or teacher, not of the Church. We see this in the instance of Philip, both in Samaria and afterwards, in his intercourse with the Ethiopian statesman. We may infer, that those who "went everywhere

Acts viii. 4. preaching the Word," would naturally baptize as this "evangelist" did, and under similar conditions. All the baptisms recorded in the New Testament are connected with individual teachers, never with any Church. Nor is any great importance ever attached to them, as if any very momentous consequences, were involved, one way or the other,—a fact which accords better with our view of baptism, as forming the entry into the school of the learner, than with the theory, which makes it the prelude to full Church fellowship.

6. Those who had received baptism were encouraged to seek and to expect the gift of the Holy Spirit. This in fact is the great, the only real, baptism of the New Testament, which the apostles were always desirous of seeing fulfilled on the souls of their converts. With this special object in view the baptized disciples formed always the

outer circle of the Christian body, associated with their teachers, and mingled in Acts ii. 42-47. the public and social assemblies, where they ministered; and the Lord daily united those together who were being saved, that is, as we understand it, those who had entered into and were advancing in, the experience of salvation. Light is cast upon this expression as we pursue the apostolic history. The accession of the Divine Spirit to the souls of believers, imparting spiritual life and power, became more Acts v. 32. and more distinctly an object of expectation. Peter boldly appeals, in the presence of the Sanhedrim, to the Holy Spirit, actually given to those who obeyed Christ, as a living witness of His resurrection and exaltation to heaven. Sent from Jerusalem with John, to see Acts viii. 14, &c. what Philip had been doing in Samaria, the two apostles, finding that no sacred fire from heaven, no Spirit baptism, had descended on the baptized, at once made this the object of their special prayer, which was not unanswered. The exceptional case of Cornelius and his friends has been already considered (pp. 31 and 51); but as an exception it proves the same rule, as serving to show that Spirit baptism was regarded, as the consummation of baptism with water. Paul's inquiry of the disciples he met with at Ephesus

(p. 55), points strongly in the same direction, as showing the real object, around which his anxieties circled.

These facts of the apostolic history are significant enough in themselves; but they become much more so when viewed in the light of the frequent references in the Epistles to the presence of the Holy Spirit, as impressing, so to speak, the Divine seal upon the faith and hope of the Christian, or as constituting the criterion of his filial relationship to God in Christ. It is thus rendered abundantly clear, that until the Spirit baptism had been received, the Christian disciple was considered not to have passed into membership in the real Church of Christ, and, therefore (and all our Baptist friends will agree with us in the inference), as not admissible to full fellowship in local and congregational Churches. Certain it is, that in epistles addressed to local Churches as such, as in those to the Churches at Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica, the actual possession of the Holy Spirit is ever recognized as the common and essential feature of all their members.

The natural, and, as it appears to us, the only satisfactory explanation of the facts, which we have thus briefly brought together, under

these six heads, is, that external baptism was, in the apostolic Churches, given to those, who having more or less heard the preached gospel, presented, whether in professed belief or in signs of impression of any kind, along with a desire to be baptized, reasonable security of discipleship, and that, being placed thus formally in the position of regular learners of Christian truth, they were directed and stimulated to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit, after receiving which they passed into full Church communion. This view appears to us to be decidedly most in harmony with all the facts and teachings of the New Testament.

To say that the apostles baptized on the condition of *conversion*, would, in a wide sense of the word, be very near the truth ; in any proper sense it would, of the two, be more correct, than to say that they did so on the condition of regeneration ; and unquestionably, were our Baptist brethren henceforth to adopt the former condition and give up the latter, they would advance one step nearer to primitive practice. Any religious change of thought or feeling, which leads a person to pass from one form of religion to another, may be called a conversion ; and in this general notion of the thing, the apostle may be said to have baptized

on the condition of conversion. But conversion in the general Biblical sense, is a voluntary turning from sin unto God ; and in the stricter evangelical sense, it is such a turning by means of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly, however, such a conversion cannot be accepted on a mere profession of it. Evidence is as much required for this as for regeneration ; insincere or superstitious pretensions may be made as easily to the one as to the other ; and no less delay, examination and care would be necessary on the part of the Christian teacher, to preclude imposture, and even self-deception, in the candidate. As no principle of this sort is ever insisted or acted on by the apostles, it cannot be affirmed that they baptized on the condition of a real conversion, any more than on that of a Divine regeneration ; though we doubt not, as we have already intimated, that, as a matter of fact, those whom they baptized were *often* enlightened and honest converts, and, in one instance, at least, really regenerated. It must have been, however, as we submit to the candid consideration of our opponents, to the prospect of permanent discipleship, that the apostolic baptizers had special regard.

CHAPTER III.

PRE-EXISTING RITES OF PURIFICATION AMONG THE JEWS.

WE now enter upon a brief inquiry into the nature of those more ancient Jewish rites, which bear any analogy to Christian baptism, with the view of ascertaining how far they affect, in the way of confirmation or otherwise, the conclusions at which we have arrived. Our limits will not permit us to do more than just to glance at these rites; and we refer the reader, who desires a more complete investigation, to more elaborate treatises.

§ 1. Mosaic baptisms.

These consisted in sprinklings and washings, which in certain cases were Divinely enjoined, as when a Hebrew had contracted any real or ceremonial uncleanness, disqualifying him from entering the temple, or taking part in religious service. A full account of them is given in Numbers xix.; and they are called baptisms in Hebrews ix. 10, though not by precisely the same word as is applied to Christian baptism and to

that of John. No doubt one design of these Mosaic baptisms, or at least of the regulations connected with them, was sanatory, and particularly in the case of leprosy, in which the priest was not to sprinkle the water upon the person, until he was satisfied, by a personal inspection, that he was perfectly sound. The same thing appears also in the case of contact with a dead body. But besides the sanatory purpose, there was one purely religious ; and it is with this that we are now exclusively concerned. The external baptism had confessedly some relation to moral and religious purity ; and we ask, what it was.

It was *not* an outward sign or profession of such a purity, as actually existing, and previously produced by other means. In most cases it was too evident that this had no existence. "All the nation of Israel do assert, as it were, with one mouth, that all the nation of Israel were brought into the covenant, with other things, by baptism." "Israel," saith Maimonides, the great interpreter of the Jewish law, "was admitted into the covenant by three things, namely, by circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice. . . . Baptism was in the wilderness before the giving of the law, as it said,—‘Thou shalt sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their

garments.'""* But the nation of Israel were not at this time in a state even of moral purity, as their subsequent history plainly shows; nor was anything professed on their part save an external adherence to the service of Jehovah. Their profession of anything higher than this came afterwards. In like manner, other instances of Mosaic baptism show, that they were never regarded as professions or accredited signs of moral or religious purity in those who received them.

It will, we suppose, be pretended by no one, that such baptisms were the direct means of moral purification, or in any way religiously affected the soul of the recipient. There can, however, be no doubt, that, so far as they had a religious significance at all, it was in symbolizing moral truths, and pointing to Divine provisions, actual or prospective, for the religious health and welfare of men; while the administration of such ordinances by the priest created or restored, and in every case indicated, an external connection of the recipient with a positive religious system, in which moral purity was required and enjoined. This is seen in the numerous figurative allusions to these baptisms, where the sacred writer has in view only a

* Lightfoot's Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations on Matt. iii.

religious purification. Psalm li. 7; Isaiah i. 16; Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.

§ 2. Circumcision.

We are not to suppose that this rite really originated in the family of Abraham, or owed its first adoption directly to a Divine appointment. On the contrary, it appears from the references of the earliest historians to have been an established custom of certain nations of antiquity, and notably, of the Egyptians, Phœnicians and others, before the times of Abraham; and no Hebrew writer, either within or without the circle of the Old Testament Scriptures, not excepting Philo and Josephus, ever claimed for his nation the honour of its first institution. The Egyptians in particular would never have borrowed the rite from the Hebrews, during the time of their first sojourn among Gen. xliii. 32; xli. 34. them, whom as a pastoral people they held in abhorrence. Besides, circumcision is said to be practised, down to this day, by the Indians of South America, the Congo negroes, and the Kaffirs, who cannot, without extreme difficulty, be supposed to have ever come in contact with the ancient Israelites.

So far, however, from this view of circumcision creating any obstacles in the way of the devout believer in the sacred Scriptures, it sheds

a new and interesting light on the reason which led to its introduction among the chosen people of God. For in the case of the ancient Egyptians and Phœnicians, the observance of the rite appears not to have extended beyond the Priestly and Military castes, and to have been regarded in those castes as a mark of peculiar sanctity, or at least, of consecration to higher and more honourable service. But, when Jehovah adopted circumcision, it was as the common mark of *all* His people, to signify, by a striking emblem, that they were *all* to be holy and entirely consecrated unto Himself. It is manifest how at a time, when this sacred observance, distasteful as it may be to us, was the distinctive badge of a few, the extension of it to *all* would tell in favour of the peculiar character, which was to attach to the Hebrews. They were to be thus marked off, as the chosen heritage of the Lord,—a holy nation, and, as it were, a kingdom of priests, to perform in some sense the functions of priests among the nations of the earth, and to be a type of the Christian Church.

Deut. vii. 6;
Exod. xix. 6;
Isa. lxi. 6;
1 Pet. ii. 9.

This view of the origin of circumcision among the Hebrews is confirmed by the manner and circumstances of its imposition upon Abraham. On turning to the ancient narrative, it will be

found that he was now, after a sufficient experience of Jehovah's beneficence and faithfulness, by means of which his confidence had been gained, required to commence a new chapter of his religious history, and to enter on a higher communion with God. Hitherto he had known the Divine Being, who led him from the land of his idolatrous fathers, mainly as a shield and exceeding great reward," as his invincible defender and benefactor; *now* Jehovah reveals Himself as the Almighty and Supreme, and calls him to an intercourse of purity and righteousness. At this crisis in the religious history of the patriarch it is, that God enters into a covenant with him and his descendants, signalled by circumcision, to be imposed not only on himself, but also on all the members of his household, and to be perpetuated through future generations. The covenant had reference, indeed, to the land of Canaan, and the material possessions and national power of the Hebrew people; but these were only the envelope, as it were, in which inestimably greater blessings were enclosed,—all in fact that could be included in the boundless promise—"I will be their God." Circumcision, the outward mark and symbol of this covenant, was to the patriarch himself, whatever it may have been to his

posterity, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had," a Divine token Rom. iv. 11. of his gracious acceptance with God on the score of his faith.

But to his descendants, and especially as re-enjoined under Moses, it was the external sign of the covenant between God and their nation, the covenant, in which not only temporal and political, but still more, certain religious and spiritual advantages were provided, on the conditions of fidelity and obedience to Jehovah. Our present concern is only with the latter aspect of circumcision, in which it symbolized religious purification, and placed the recipient in outward connection with all the resources of the Mosaic system, by the right use of which such purification might be obtained.

It is quite unnecessary to raise the questions, as to whether circumcision was regarded by the Old Testament writers and the Jewish people as being either the external sign and profession, an actually existing religious purity, or the means of immediately producing it, in the person circumcised. Neither of these positions, as thus stated, has any support at least in the Scriptures. Even at its original introduction, it was imposed, as we have seen, on all Abraham's domestics and slaves, whether born in his house, or bought

with his money, as well as upon his son Ishmael; and it was in future to be performed on every male child on the eighth day of its life. But in none of these or such like cases can it be pretended, that any moral or religious change had passed antecedently, or did pass at the time of the ceremony. Throughout the ages of subsequent Jewish history, the rite was administered to the infant children alike of the pious and the impious; and no religious advantages were contemplated in connection with it, save such as were prospective, and depended on the future conduct of the circumcised person himself, as a member of the Theocratic commonwealth of Israel.

All this is placed beyond reasonable doubt by the terms in which this ordinance is referred to, both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Not only, for example, are the Israelites called

Dent. x. 16. upon to circumcise their hearts, in order to become lovingly obedient to Jehovah,

Dent. xix. 6. but He Himself promises to do this for them, and to ensure that they shall thus love Him with all their heart and soul. Jeremiah presses home the same exhortation on the men

Jer. iv. 4; vi. 10;
ix. 26. of his day, and declares that they

were "uncircumcised in ear and in heart." In fact, the word uncircumcised is a com-

mon Biblical expression for moral and religious uncleanness. The Apostle Paul tells us, that the true circumcision was not in the flesh but of the heart, that it profited only in keeping the Law, and that in disobeying the Law circumcision became *uncircumcision*. He further calls the Divine regeneration of the soul, "the circumcision of Christ," and claims to be himself, along with all regenerate believers, the real circumcision, or circumcised people of God, "who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." From these facts we can have no difficulty in gathering, what circumcision was intended to be in the older economy, and what it was to the true Israelite,—a solemn religious service, presenting in emblem the moral purification and the spiritual regeneration of the soul, and placing the circumcised in formal union with all the means and resources provided by God, for its eventual or ultimate realisation, on the right individual use of which resources everything depended.

Lev. xxvi. 41;
Isa. lli. 1;
Ezek. xlii. 7;
Acts vii. 51;
Col. ii. 18;
Rom. ii. 25-29.

Col. ii. 11.

Phil. iii. 8.

§ 3. John's baptism.

The mission of John the Baptist was to prepare the people of Israel for the approaching advent of the Messiah; and it was rendered

necessary, if only by the state of formalism, infidelity and licentiousness, into which all classes had sunk. Acting up to the privileges of religious light and power afforded by the Law and the Prophets, the temple services and the instruction of the synagogue system, the people might perhaps have been sufficiently prepared, without such a special mission, to understand and to welcome the Christ. But as their general religious condition had proceeded almost to the farthest extreme in the opposite direction, a preparation was urgently needed, and such a preparation as consisted in a thorough repentance and reformation of life ; and to bring about this, John was sent from God. John's ministry included a water baptism, which stood in some relation or other to the religious ends contemplated by him ; and the question arises here, as in the case of Christian baptism, what was this relation ?

No one, we believe, has ever asserted, that the mere performance of the ceremony actually produced the religious change, or was immediately followed by it. We may therefore at once advance to the inquiry, whether an antecedent repentance, evidenced by a corresponding moral and religious reformation of life and conduct, was the condition, on which John insisted in those, whom he

baptized. We answer this question in the negative, on the following grounds.

1. This condition is nowhere expressly mentioned, or even implied in what is recorded of John's preaching. But such explicit terms of baptism must have been rigorously insisted on, if they had been required; otherwise, the people accustomed to analogous ordinances without such conditions, would never as a rule have fulfilled them.

2. John himself declared that his Matt. iii. 11. baptism was administered unto or with a view to repentance, as a state to be attained, not because of repentance, or after the applicant for baptism had repented. Repentance, therefore, with all that it involved, was not the condition exacted, but the end contemplated.

3. The immense numbers of persons, Matt. iii. 5, 6. who rushed to John's baptism and received it, rendered all discrimination of character impossible. The baptized, indeed, are said to have confessed their sins; but clearly in the circumstances no evidence of sincerity and of right motives could have been either given or received; nor, is it certain, as Dr. Halley has observed, whether their confessions were uttered in words, or were merely implied in the reception of baptism itself.

4. John recognized among those, who came to

be baptized some notoriously wicked men, whom Matt. iii. 7-10; he addresses as a "generation of Luke iii. 7. vipers," and more stringently urges to repentance; but he does not appear to have refused them his baptism. In fact, we never find him hesitating to baptize any one, who came to Matt. iii. 15. him, except One, whom he considered too good for such an ordinance.

These, with other considerations, which might be adduced, lead us inevitably to the conclusion, that a repentance fully evidenced as sincere and real, was not the condition on which John administered his baptism. On the other hand, all the circumstances of the case, and the results which ensued, as they come out in the New Testament, go to show that his baptism, while it symbolized moral and spiritual purification, placed those who received it in the position of his disciples, to come under his influence and instruction, with the view of attaining by progressive repentance, and, by the practical fruit, which should evince its genuineness, a state of complete preparation for the Christ.

§ 4. Conclusion.

It has now been seen in the instances of the Mosaic baptisms, circumcision, and the baptism of John, that the relation between the outward form and the moral and religious ends contem-

plated, was simply one of emblematical significance, and at most pointed out only the means of attaining them. In all the three cases alike, the external action held the position merely of an emblem of a higher operation on the soul ; and the reception of the rite had no other religious effect than *formally* to place the recipient in connection with certain Divine institutions and privileges, which, rightly used, were fitted to help him onwards to the greater good.

Now this manifestly yields a very strong confirmation of our position with reference to Christian baptism. These pre-existing Jewish rites present in several respects a close analogy to it, as consisting in external performances, most of them in a similar use of water, and all of them having some relation to the attainment of moral or spiritual purification. Finding, then, that three out of the four involve, according to their nature and design, essentially the same relation to the higher religious ends, we naturally expect, and expect most strongly, that the fourth, Christian baptism, will do the same, unless we are expressly taught to the contrary by Christ and His apostles.

This argument is rendered almost demonstrative by two considerations.

1. If the apostles had been entrusted with a

baptism so entirely different in its nature, from similar pre-existing Jewish rites, as the Romanist on the one side, or the modern Baptist on the other, strenuously maintains, they would naturally have made this perfectly clear and plain by the fullest explanation. Only by doing so could they hope to promote the progress of a religion, with which baptism, under either mode of viewing it, would be so vitally connected.

2. Supposing the apostles to have entered into no explanations of this kind, the peoples to whom they preached the gospel, and presented their baptism, must inevitably have fallen into total misconceptions of its nature. The Jews would necessarily have presumed upon its analogy with pre-existing rites, and regarded themselves as placed by it in the same position with respect to its ulterior ends; and the Pagans would have ascribed to it some intrinsic efficacy, as in their own religious rites, and have taken so naturally to the idea of a baptismal regeneration, that it would hardly have been necessary for their Christian teachers formally to propound it.

For these reasons, we must conclude, that Christian baptism occupies the same general position with reference to its recipients, as circumcision and John's baptism did to theirs,

unless it can still be shown that the contrary is explicitly stated in the New Testament.

But this cannot be shown; rather the very opposite is demonstrable. Let the reader again bring before his mind, that no terms or conditions of baptism are anywhere formally stated by Christ or the apostles (p. 60), that baptism was regularly administered with a view to the *subsequent* reception of spiritual purity and life (p. 52), and that the general teachings and facts, recorded for our guidance, go to show that the baptized came into the position of disciples with a view to obtain, sooner or later, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the only baptism to which the apostles attached much importance (p. 62), and he will surely feel the full truth and force of what we affirm, and come with us to the same conclusion.

But this is not all. We call the reader's attention to another remarkable fact. The New Testament, as Mr. Godwin has shown, contains no account of the original institution of Christian baptism. It appears from John iv. 1, 2, and iii. 26, that the disciples of our Lord began to baptize at a very early period in His ministry; but no account is given of the particular objects they had in view, in distinction from those of the Baptist, or of the principles

on which they proceeded. Yet theirs must have been Christian baptism. Moreover, the commission given by Christ to the apostles, on finally entrusting them with His gospel (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20), assumes that the nature and design of baptism were already understood, and merely directs them to extend to Gentile nations, what hitherto had been confined to the Jews. The same thing is equally apparent in Mark xvi. 16. We look in vain for anything more explicit in commissions previously given to the twelve (Matt. x.), or to the seventy (Luke x. 1-16). How different is this from the formal institution of the Lord's Supper, connected as it was with the Jewish passover. The terms in which the Saviour expressed its nature and objects are given us no less than four times. Nothing can more plainly intimate, that Christian baptism, did not essentially differ from similar religious rites previously in use; in its relation to the higher spiritual blessings, which it presented in emblem to its recipients, and that, therefore, it is to be administered as the prelude, not to full church communion, but to a course of preparatory instruction.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

THIS question, in the case of adults, has been already decided. If the views given in the two preceding chapters are correct, not only all regenerate persons not having been previously baptized, but also all inquirers, who by a profession of faith give at least a reasonable security of permanent discipleship, are eligible candidates for baptism.

The question, however, has arisen in modern times, and become the occasion of much controversy, whether infants or little children are, under any circumstances, admissible to this Christian ordinance. This question is to furnish the subject of the present chapter.

§ 1. Our position in relation to this inquiry.

The primary question between our Baptist brethren and ourselves is, as we have seen, *not* as to the proper subjects of the ordinance, but as to its real nature and design; and we have ventured to express our conviction that, if this more important question were decided, every

other would soon adjust itself, or at least sink into a merely secondary consideration. If *our* final conclusion were to accept the theory of our Baptist brethren, on the nature of the ordinance, we should of course at once agree with them, that paedobaptism is under all circumstances inadmissible. But, we submit in all confidence, that, were *they* fully to accept our position, as the only one to which the New Testament directs us, they would very soon come to see that the baptism of little children, would, under certain conditions, be entirely proper and reasonable. They would go farther, we believe, and look upon our practice, in this matter, as only the natural and logical sequel to our expositions of the facts and teachings of the apostles, even in the absence of any sanction explicitly given by them to such a practice.

All Christian parents carefully disciple their offspring, from their earliest years, in the sense of subjecting them to religious influence and teaching, and bringing them, when sufficiently advanced, regularly to their own place of public worship. Such a course of Christian discipline of their children is as prevalent among the Baptists as among ourselves, and is as earnestly inculcated by their pastors. Suppose then, that any such Baptist parent should come, as many

of them have done, after examining the subject in the light of Scripture, to concur heartily in the views of baptism presented in the preceding chapters, and to regard it as the ordinance of discipleship, intended by our Lord formally to initiate a course of instruction and training in Christian truth, with a view to the eventual attainment of its highest blessings, would he not really feel that the baptism of his child, whom he intended so to disciple, would be a right thing, consonant with the design of the ordinance, and, in a word, a compliance with the will of Christ ?

To this it may be replied, "The discipleship of children can be as well carried through, without such baptism, as in fact it is with *us*, and therefore, the administration in question, would, even in the case supposed, be at least unnecessary and perhaps useless." Here it would be quite fair to retort—"Supposing that we were to accept your views of baptism, still adults, on a credible profession of faith and regeneration, might be as well admitted to full Church membership, without 'believer's baptism' as with it, as in fact, they are so admitted now with *us* ; and, therefore, 'believer's baptism' would still be unnecessary and perhaps useless." But the truth is, in either case, our practice is to be determined not by our own views of expediency,

but by what we believe is the will of our Lord ; and the administration also in either case may subserve important ends, naturally resulting from its nature and design, as understood by each party. What these ends are from the Baptist point of view, it is not for us to explain; we proceed to show, briefly, what they are from our own.

1. In the baptism of his child, the Christian parent asserts his right to direct its religious action during its tender years, and to make use of all fair means for moulding its character and convictions in accordance with his own. Nature and revelation alike invest him with this right. Under the authority of Nature it is everywhere acted upon and nowhere disputed. Under that of Revelation, it is enough to appeal to Gen. xviii. 18, various Scriptures, in all which, as in 19; Dent xi. 19; others, this parental right is recognised and directed. Reference also Psa. lxxviii. 4, 6; Ephes. vi. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 4, 12. may be made to the frequent mention in the New Testament of household baptisms, which as apparently depending, at least in Acts xvi. 15. some cases, on the decision of the parent, fall in with this view of his authority.

It is also presupposed in a practice, by no means confined to pædobaptists, of parental dedication of children to God. Such a dedica-

tion, in our judgment, does not constitute the essential principle of infant baptism, though it may very well be united with it, as in fact springing from the same right in fathers and mothers to control the religious course of their children, until they arrive at years of discretion. But whether its principle consist in dedication or in formal discipline, in either separately or in the two combined in one solemn religious act, infant baptism, as asserting the parent's authority against all, whether priest or prince, who would deprive him of it, or restrict him in its exercise, is not without its use.

2. In the baptism of his child the parent is solemnly reminded of his responsibility. Not only has he a *right* to maintain, but also a duty to discharge. Parents are the only religious educators of their children, recognised in the New Testament; and they are expressly enjoined to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The baptismal service both Ephes. vi. 4. implies an acknowledgment of this responsibility on the part of parents, and is a special means of impressing them with its gravity. For just as the adult candidate for baptism consents for himself to become a learner, and to subject his mind to Christian teaching and influence, so, in the case before us, the parents become sponsors

for the same things on behalf of their children, who are under their rightful control; and it is the part of the baptizer to expound the nature and extent of their duties. A formal service, which secures all this, is fitted to exercise a salutary practical influence both on parents and children.

3. In the baptism of his child the parent is symbolically directed as to the great end, which he is to contemplate, and the means by which it is to be attained. The affusion of water is the expression in emblem of spiritual purification and life; and this is the supreme object of all Christian instruction and effort. The formula of words, with which the sprinkling of water is accompanied, solemnly appealing to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, points to the whole economy of human salvation, in which these adorable Persons of the Godhead severally and in union manifest the fulness of the Divine majesty, grace, and power, and informs the parties most deeply concerned, whence the gracious influence is to be drawn, for the fulfilment of their purposes.

It is the function of the baptizer to unfold the meaning of this sublime ideal, the spiritual life and salvation of which it is the promise, and the conditions and means of its realisation. The

occasion is generally one on which the deepest impressions may be made; and it is specially desirable, that at seasons, when the parental relationship and its liabilities make themselves most deeply felt, that fathers and mothers should be emphatically and solemnly told, that the new object of their common affection has the most pressing need to pass in due course through the crisis of a second birth, and to come into a filial relationship to God, and into a joint-heirship with Christ. A service, which is fitted, by means of a striking emblem, unfolded in wise and solemn words, and commended to God in earnest prayers, to convey such lessons of spiritual truth as these, at a time when the tenderest domestic feelings are naturally excited, has, in our view, a manifest and valuable conduciveness to the highest purposes of Christianity.

4. In the baptism of his child, the parent places himself and his child in a connection more or less close and intimate, with the teaching institutions of Christianity. The connecting link is generally the baptizer, specially the pastor, in whose stead, however, another person may occasionally officiate. But in the proper order of things the pastor should administer the baptismal rite, in whose case there will generally

exist the best security for the real discipleship of the child, which is, or ought to be, made the indispensable condition of the administration. The baptizer shares the responsibility in some degree with the parent, and ought to regard those whom he has baptized as entitled to his oversight and care. He should, therefore, see to it in all cases where it is necessary, that the baptized really become catechumens, receiving Christian instruction at home, in the Sunday-school, or elsewhere, and attending, as they grow in years, on the public means of grace. When these conditions are carefully observed, as far as it is possible to observe them, every baptized child may be said to have been brought at least into the outer courts of the temple of God, with its face turned in the direction of the inner sanctuary of spiritual fellowship with His saints.

It is no part of our present duty to advert to the extent to which these obligations, connected with baptism, are generally fulfilled. There may be room still for the remark of Philip Henry, that "if infant baptism were more improved it would be less objected to." Our business, however, is to unfold what, as administered to infants, the Christian ordinance really is, and what it involves and must involve according to its essential nature and design. The abuse of

any institution may render it meaningless, and even worse than meaningless; but for this it is not answerable. What we contend for is, that the right observance of infant baptism is, for the four reasons we have just assigned, well fitted, under God's blessing, to fulfil the most important religious purposes to the child, to the parents, and to the Church of Christ.

Our Baptist friends, indeed, may still ask, in the form of an objection,—“But what good can the baptismal service do the child?” To this we may fairly reply by another question,—“What good does the baptismal service, according to your views, do the adult?” You disclaim, quite as strongly as we do, any regenerating influence through the medium, either of the water, as Tertullian affirms, or of the administrator, as others may prefer to say. Of what *religious* benefit then we ask, are the application of the water and the utterance of the Trinitarian formula to the recipient himself, in your baptizings more than in ours?

There may indeed *generally* be the difference that, in the one case, the recipient understands what is going on, and in the other does not; and in reference to this difference, our baptism has been described as “a ceremony which has no efficacy in itself when it is administered to

an unintelligent and unconscious subject, whose senses can never discern that the thing has been done." But, has the baptismal ceremony any "efficacy in itself" when administered to an intelligent and conscious subject? If so, of what nature is this efficacy, and what does it produce? We know how the Romanist priest would answer these questions in reference to his own adult baptisms; how will our Baptist friends answer them in reference to theirs?

If, indeed, the baptismal ceremony be understood to include the prayers and exhortations of the general service, a salutary influence may be exerted in both cases, and, in that of infant baptism, none the less *really* because indirectly.

But we are told, that for such a service no parallel or precedent is to be found "in the whole history of religious ceremonial, whether in the Old Testament or in the New." Let us see.

1. There is recorded in the Old Testament, the religious ordinance of circumcision, in the first instance as the outward sign of the covenant of God with Abraham, afterwards re-enacted under the Mosaic dispensation, in both cases regularly performed on unconscious infants. This, as we have seen (p. 70), was a religious ordinance, though no doubt it had also import-

ant political and civil consequences, which may often have absorbed too much of the attention of parents. The same, however, might have been said up to a recent period of baptism; but no one would on this account deny it to be a religious institution. Even membership in our own Churches, or the want or loss of it, may have in many instances civil incidents of great moment. Notwithstanding, however, all worldly issues of this kind, circumcision, and especially as observed by God-fearing Hebrews, was a religious ordinance, producing at the time no beneficial *effect* upon the unintelligent subject, any more than infant baptism may do now, though designed to be eventually of "religious benefit to him, to whom it was administered."

Moreover, he may come to know as certainly in the one case, as in the other, "that the thing has been done;" for in either, the evidence would consist mainly in testimony and in family connections. No external mark could by itself amount to proof, that a man had been received, during the period of infancy, by circumcision into the covenant of God with Abraham; for he might, as we have seen (p. 70), have been circumcised in connection with heathen institutions.

2. We have a parallel also in Luke ii. 22, 23, where we read that the infant Jesus was

presented by his parents to the Lord in the temple. This service of presentation, though oc-

Exod. xiii. 2. casioned by the claim set up by Jehovah to the first-born of man and beast, is not to be confounded, either with that or with the redemption of the first-born, which ensued as a consequence. For the purpose of redemption the priest came to the house of the child, in order to estimate the amount of the ransom according to the circumstances of its parents, and to take the money; and this custom is observed still among the Jews. But no presentation in the temple of the first-born of man, is anywhere explicitly required in the Old Testament. The nearest approach to it is in Numbers xviii. 15, which, however, falls far short of a Divine command to bring the child even to the tabernacle, while the tribes of Israel lay encamped around, and could still less apply to an appearance in the temple, when the nation occupied the whole of Palestine. Accordingly, we find no examples of the kind throughout the Old Testament history, and no references in the prophets, either to the observance or to the neglect of any such custom. Reasoning from the analogy of the firstlings of other animals, we should rather infer that the presentation in the temple took place, only in those cases, where

the child, instead of being redeemed, was in some form consecrated to the service of God.

Be this as it may, the presentation in the temple was probably a custom, which sprung up in much later times among pious Hebrews. One thing at least is perfectly clear: no one has a right to say, that this ceremony of presentation was not a religious service. All that we can ascertain in reference to it goes to show that it was. If, even in its own home, the priest having received the price of its redemption, laid his hand upon the child's head and blessed it, saying, "The Lord make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh," we may be sure that at least as much as this was done in the temple, when a child was presented there to the Lord.

Here then we have a religious ceremony performed upon "an unintelligent and unconscious infant," directly of no religious benefit to him at the time, and leaving behind no external mark,—in all these respects a parallel to infant baptism, yet a parallel exalted by its connection with the Son of God, and by its insertion in the gospel history commended to our special attention and sympathy.

3. Our Lord has Himself furnished us with a parallel in the interesting scene recorded by

three of the Evangelists. These children were Matt. xix. 18; sufficiently young to be unconscious Mark x. 18; subjects of the Saviour's action, as we Luke xviii. 15. learn both from His taking them into His arms, and also from Luke's expression—"infants." The request of the parents was, that He should put His hands upon them and bless them,—a ceremony which could not be of any religious benefit to them, except in the same manner, in which infant baptism may be so to its subjects. Possibly some speculative difficulty of this nature led the disciples to rebuke the parents for thrusting their "unintelligent" babes upon the notice of Christ; but "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark x. 16).

We can, however, well afford to dispense with these examples. For, even allowing all that is urged against infant baptism, on the score of the unconsciousness of its subjects, to be perfectly true, our position as Pædobaptists is not essentially disturbed. Provided, that we baptize with a view to discipleship, we are entirely at liberty, consistently with our principles, to defer the administration of the ordinance from the age of two, three, or six months, to that of as many years, or even later still. But, as the precise period, when a child first becomes capable of

learning any elements of Christian truth, is indeterminate, an early baptism is for this reason to be preferred, as well as in order to take advantage of newly-excited parental interest and affection.

§ 2. Antecedent probabilities.

The infant members of a family were admissible, equally with their parent, to those Jewish rites, which bear any analogy to Christian baptism. From this fact there arises a very strong probability, unless we find explicit declarations in the New Testament to the contrary, that children would be under similar circumstances admissible also to the initiatory ordinance of Christianity.

We do not lay great stress upon proselyte baptisms among the Jews. It is by no means certain, that such baptisms were administered to those, who attached themselves to the Jewish faith, before the Christian era. The opinion of theologians in this country may be on the whole in favour of this view; but in Germany it goes rather in the opposite direction. We lean to the English belief. The manner in which baptism is referred to, on the occasion of its introduction by John, appears to indicate, that it was already a well-known ceremony of initiation to a new form of religion. This is particularly

manifest in the nature of those inquiries, which were pressed upon John the Baptist by the John 1. 19-25. deputation of priests and Levites. The burden of their questionings was not as to the significance of baptism itself, or why such a rite was introduced, but as to who the Baptist himself was, and what was his authority for baptizing. It seems to have been taken for granted, that if he had been the Messiah, or Elias, or the expected prophet, he would naturally commence his public ministry by baptizing. All this certainly tells in favour of an earlier practice of baptism, such as later Jewish writers declare was practised in the admission of proselytes to Judaism.

Be this as it may, no one will dispute that, whether the baptism of proselytes originated before the apostolic age or afterwards, all the children of a family were included in it along with their parents; and let this fact be taken for whatever it is worth.

In the case of circumcision the facts are beyond the reach of scepticism. The rite was regularly performed on every male child on the eighth day from its birth; and whenever a Gentile was, on his own profession of the Jewish faith, received fully as a member of the commonwealth of Israel, circumcision was necessary

for the members of his family, as well as for himself.

Now we do not say, that Christian baptism was intended to take the place of circumcision; but manifestly the two ordinances were closely analogous, as in other respects so also in this, that both were initiatory, intended to introduce the recipient into a formal external connection with the religious system, to which they severally belonged.

On the basis of these facts we found the inference, that, as infants were admitted to proselyte baptism and to circumcision, so also they are admissible to Christian baptism under similar circumstances, unless there is positive evidence in the New Testament to the contrary. The grounds of this conclusion are, as in the question of the nature and design of the ordinance (p. 79), briefly these two :—

1. If Christian baptism had differed so essentially from all similar ordinances in use among the Jews, as to exclude the children of professing parents, the apostles would naturally have been disposed to make this perfectly clear to all their Jewish converts; and

2. Unless they had done this, and done it carefully and persistently, such children would certainly have been baptized. Their converts

would have fallen into error on this point, and a wrong practice of baptism would have been the natural consequence. These conclusions, as it appears to us, are irresistible.

But, not only does the New Testament contain no positive evidence that infants were under any circumstances to be excluded from the ordinance of baptism, but presents many indications, as we shall presently see, that they were to be admitted. In this respect, therefore, we may fairly conclude, baptism is as large and wide in its conditions in Christianity, as circumcision was in Judaism.

Our Baptist friends may reply,—“ But, if these things are so, how is it, that the baptism of infants is not somewhere at least mentioned by New Testament writers ? ” To this in reply, we may ask, and as we conceive, with much greater force,—If these things are *not* so, how is it that the *exclusion* of children from baptism is not somewhere expressly mentioned by New Testament writers ? Their reticence in the latter case is immeasurably more difficult to explain than in the former. For, if the Baptist position is the correct one, the apostles were introducing an entirely new initiatory ordinance, different from all analogous institutions hitherto known, and one opposed to all the natural preconcep-

tions, and sympathies of their countrymen, as well as to their own. The very fact of their own emancipation as Jews, from the bondage of such preconceptions, would render them the more ready to assist in the emancipation of others, and to point out the broad and essential difference in this respect, so intensely interesting to all Christian parents, between baptism and circumcision. We should have expected, too, that in the epistles to the Churches, but still more in those to Timothy and Titus, there would have been some directions bearing on the preparation of catechumens for baptism, after the manner of later times, and the evidence to be had of regeneration before admitting them to the ordinance. Nothing of this kind, however, is to be seen; on the contrary, the apostles sometimes, as we shall see, approach perilously near to a direct encouragement of the parental prejudices, against which they ought rather to have forewarned and testified.

But if the matter is, as we have endeavoured to represent it, and baptism held the same general relation to Christianity as circumcision did to Judaism, no explicit teachings and warnings of this kind were necessary; infant baptism under certain conditions followed as a matter of course; and the silence of the apostles on this point is at once accounted for.

§ 3. New Testament evidence.

We now proceed, on the basis of the positions we have already gained, to examine the evidence of the New Testament itself, on the question, whether infants or children are admissible under any circumstances to Christian baptism.

The first passage we shall appeal to is the commission given by the risen Saviour to His apostles and servants, on entrusting them with the great work of building up His kingdom in the world.

“Go ye and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.)

Here the general command is to disciple the nations of the world at large, that is, as we gather, not only from the subsequent conduct of the apostles, but expressly from Luke xxiv. 47, and Mark xvi. 15, to proclaim everywhere the glad tidings of the gospel, and, as far as practicable, to lead men, without distinction of class, under special instruction in its great facts and principles, with a view to their salvation. This command, in the case of those who, under the joyful sounds of the gospel message, professed belief and were prepared to attach themselves

to the new religion, was to be carried into effect by baptizing and teaching; in other words, they were to be formally enrolled by baptism in the position of learners, and to be led on to a mature understanding of Christianity, and, as far as means could secure it, to a sincere surrender of themselves to Christ.

This interpretation is, not only in keeping with, what we have seen of the apostolic practice, but is founded on the grammatical construction of the passage itself. According to the latter, the commission to disciple is to be fulfilled by baptizing and teaching. Just as the Saviour, in an earlier commission, charged the Matt. x. 7. twelve apostles to *preach*, and proceeded to explain how this general charge was to be executed, by adding the participial clause, in the *present* tense,—“*saying*, the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” so here the charge, to disciple the nations, is explicated in the two participial clauses, “baptizing them in the name, etc., and teaching them to observe,” etc., of which two parts of discipling, baptizing would appear to be the *formal initiation*, and “teaching” the continuous course of instruction, which ensued.

But with this understanding of the words, there are manifestly no limits to the Saviour’s commission, save those which may be created by

the nature of discipleship. The terms are just as wide as the possibility of making disciples. The command ends, where, *and only where*, this possibility ends. Take away all reasonable security that any one will come under permanent instruction, and all warrant to baptize ceases; but always, in the presence of such security, the command is in full force. Little children, as we have seen, can be, and are, placed in the position of disciples, in all Christian families; and therefore children, both under such circumstances, and wherever there is a security for their Christian instruction, are included in these terms. To contend for the administration of baptism exclusively to adults, is to set up arbitrary limits, which have no ground of justification in the great commission. As fairly might it be contended, that baptism should be *confined* to infants. Baptizing is formally discipling; and, wherever there is good reason to expect that the discipling will not be merely formal, but will be followed by a real course of Christian teaching and learning, there we are not only at liberty, but are even *required* by Christ's words, to administer the formal ceremony.

If this is even to us the manifest import of the inspired passage, which constitutes the Divine warrant for all Christian missions, how

much more so, if possible, must it have appeared in this light to the apostles themselves as Jews, and to the Jews in general to whom they first addressed their message. In the initiatory religious ordinance, probably of proselyte baptism, but certainly of circumcision, they had always seen children included; and therefore the idea of withholding from them the initiatory rite of Christianity could never even have occurred to their minds, unless the exclusion had been distinctly declared by Christ. Such an exclusion, as we have seen, is nowhere in the New Testament, either declared or implied; and it was therefore morally impossible that they could have understood the commission in a modern Baptist sense, any more than, if (to use Wall's illustration) it had been said,—“Go ye and disciple all the nations, *circumcising* them in the name,” etc., they could possibly have deduced from this a prohibition to administer that rite to any but adults.

We claim, therefore, this command of our Lord as of itself requiring us to baptize little children under the conditions already explained, that is to say, wherever such baptism will form the prelude to a real and permanent discipleship.

We appeal next to the words and conduct of the Saviour Himself, when brought, in the

course of His public ministry, into connection with infants ; which passage will go to confirm our interpretation of His final commission to the apostles, as well as to yield independent support of its own to our general position.

“And they brought to Him young children, that He should touch them; and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But, when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Permit the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall

Mark x. 13-16; not receive the kingdom of God as a

Matt. xix. 13, little child, shall not enter therein.

etc ;

Luke x. 15.

And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.”

We have already seen (p. 96) that these children were infants. The phrase, “kingdom of God,” or, “kingdom of heaven,” as it is in Matthew’s gospel, we understand to mean, that spiritual life and fellowship with God in Christ, which commences in the Divine regeneration of the soul, and progresses in power and completeness, as it is conducted onwards to its final consummation. Of this the immediate antecedent condition is conversion, which leads us to the entrance of the kingdom, and with its arms of repentance and faith knocks at the door; while

regeneration subsequently opens the door and leads us within. The approach of this kingdom formed the burden of the preaching of John the Baptist, of Christ when upon earth, and of the twelve disciples during His earthly ministry ; and the kingdom of God actually came on the day of Pentecost, in that descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, which had been awaiting the glorification of the Redeemer.

The phrase, "kingdom of heaven," is no doubt sometimes used in a wider sense, and is rather equivalent to the visible Church of Christ, or the body of professing Christians ; as we may see in the parables of the wheat and tares (Matt. xiii. 41), and of the net (ver. 47). But this can hardly be the meaning of the phrase in the case before us ; for into this visible kingdom of God many may and do enter, who are not in character at all like little children. The best explanation of our Lord's meaning here may be gathered from His own words, "Except ye shall Matt. xviii. 2-4. turn and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." But the twelve disciples, to whom He addressed these words, were already in the visible kingdom of heaven, so far as it had yet been established on earth. The meaning, therefore, would appear to be, that unless men should become in relation

to God as little children, surrendering themselves wholly to Him as revealed in Christ, in the simplicity of a humble, docile, childlike trust, they could not undergo that new birth, which would translate them into the real kingdom of God. He recurs to this simile of becoming as little children again and again in the course of His public teaching, a fact which shows that He regarded them as being, in their meekness and simple confidence towards their parents, on the whole the best types of that moral state, which He demands in his gospel as the condition of the Divine life, which he bestows through His Holy Spirit.

From all this the conclusion appears irresistible, that, with such a regard to little children, and considering that baptism is, as we have seen, the formal introduction to a course of religious training, our Lord could not have refused them admission to such an ordinance, under suitable conditions. This conclusion is confirmed by several considerations, suggested by His own conduct in this particular case.

1. There is a significance in the exceeding displeasure with which the Saviour rebuked the twelve disciples on this occasion, which implies that they knew, or ought to have known, better than to discourage the action of the parents in

bringing their infants to His presence ; otherwise His displeasure would have been unreasonable. We may gather from this, that the Saviour was in the habit of manifesting His love for children.

2. The action of the Saviour is not less significant, in taking these children up into His arms, putting His hands upon them and blessing them. These actions, as we have seen, meet and neutralize the objections, which have been urged against the ceremony of baptism, as administered to an unintelligent subject. If these actions were not absurd, so neither is infant baptism.

3. The explicit injunction—"Permit the little children to come unto Me, and do *not* forbid them," was a rule for the apostles, and continues to be so for the guidance of all Christ's servants. Remembering what baptism is in its design, the prelude to discipleship, we cannot but feel, under considerations such as these, that were we to refuse to the infants of Christian parents, the baptism of initiation, we should act far more in the spirit of the twelve disciples, than in that of the Master.

The next passage we shall adduce is the exhortate of the Apostle Peter to the crowds of Jews, which surrounded him on the day of Pentecost,—

“Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be Acts ii. 38, 39. baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all, that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall invite towards (Him).”

How would these words naturally be understood by a Jew? He was here called upon to repent, and to be baptized in the name of Messiah, in order to obtain the forgiveness of his sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the ground on which this call is directly founded, is, that a Divine promise has been made to *him* and to *his children*, and, as it appears, a promise of the Holy Spirit including all that belongs to salvation. How would he necessarily understand this? Our answer is,—He would take the exhortation to be baptized, and to repent, as including his children along with himself. This had been the regular course of things under the older economy. The promise of God to Abraham,

Gen. xix. 7. to be a God to him and to his seed after him, was signalized by the institution of an initiatory ordinance, which included his offspring as well as himself; and with the same inclusiveness, this ordinance was to be perpetuated through successive generations, and had come down to the hearers of Peter on this memorable

Pentecost. It appears to us, therefore, that a Divine promise of the Holy Spirit to them and to their children, could not be set forth to such an assembly of Jews, as a reason for their being baptized in the name of Messiah with a view to its fulfilment, without inevitably conveying the impression, that the exhortation to baptism embraced their children as well as themselves; unless indeed they had been expressly warned to the contrary.

This conclusion will appear all the more certain, if we consider what special Divine promise is here referred to. No doubt it was the promise cited by Peter as alone giving Ver. 16-21. the true explanation of these Pentecostal wonders, and already fulfilled upon the apostles and their believing brethren. But this promise held forth special forms of spiritual blessing directly to their children. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My hand-maidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit," etc. It is impossible, with a promise like this, presenting such an aspect of Divine favour, immediately to them and to their children, and urged as a reason why they themselves should be baptized, in order to come into the actual pos-

session of its blessings, that they, with the inveterate prepossessions of the Jewish mind, should not have understood their children to be included in the same exhortation.

On the ground of that primary canon of interpretation, which requires us to understand the words of Scripture in that sense in which they would naturally be understood by those to whom they were first addressed, we have here an unmistakable evidence that children are admissible to Christian baptism.

Our last reference is to the words of Paul,—
“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the (believing) husband; else are your children
1 Cor. vii. 14. unclean; but now are they holy.”

Here the apostle has in view those cases, no doubt of frequent occurrence in primitive times, where the one member of a married pair was a heathen and the other a Christian, the marriage itself having been contracted when both were heathens. His counsel, in such cases, is that the two should still continue to live in matrimony; and the reason he assigns for this course is, that the heathen member of the married pair is sanctified by the Christian member; and were it not so, their offspring would be unclean; whereas, by virtue of this sanctifying effect, they are holy.

Here it is to be observed, that the sanctification, asserted by the apostle, cannot be accepted, either in the moral or the spiritual sense, for no such effect could spring from the cause assigned; and we have to inquire for some other meaning of the word. The only admissible sense is that in which holiness was commonly attributed in the Old Testament to God's ancient people. Illustration of this will be seen in various Scriptures, in the Old as well as in the New Testament. In other words, the ancient people of God were hallowed as being formally consecrated to the Divine service, and placed in external covenant with Jehovah. In the same sense an unbelieving husband may be conceived of as being hallowed by a believing wife, as being formally in union with one who is consecrated to God and sanctified by His Spirit; and in the same sense their offspring are hallowed. The apostle thus places the children of even only one Christian parent on essentially the same footing with those of Jewish parents, in relation to covenanted religious means and privileges. As the latter were in a certain sense holy by virtue of their connection with Jewish parents, and received the sign of initiation into covenant relations, so the former are in the

Dent. vii. 6;
Ezra viii. 28;
Luke ii. 28;
Rom. xi. 16.

same sense holy by virtue of their connection with Christian parents, and may, therefore, receive the formal initiation into that discipleship, which is to lead on to the possession of its highest privileges.

This conclusion is strongly confirmed by a Acts xiii. 26, 82, 88; and Rom. xi. 16-24. comparison of various passages, from which it appears, that all true Christians are incorporated into the spiritual stem of Abraham and Christ, and bring with them their children into an external connection therewith, under education and training for the eventual enjoyment of the common salvation, on compliance with the appointed terms. Accordingly, as circumcision was the sign of this external connection in the former dispensations, baptism may fitly be so in the last.

These four passages, to which others might be added, taken in connection, both with the design of Christian baptism, as shown in the teaching and practice of the apostles, and foreshadowed in pre-existing similar institutions, and also with the injunction specially laid on parents to train up their "children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," afford abundant evidence that children under suitable conditions were admitted to this ordinance in the apostolic age, and are admissible to it still.

§ 4. Post-apostolic practice.

We should be content to leave our position, where it is, resting on those bases, which exist for it in the Scriptures. We have as little desire, and assuredly as little necessity, as our Baptist friends, to appeal from the teachings of inspiration to the usages of subsequent history. Strong evidence, however, may possibly arise from this source, and such evidence is entitled to a fair hearing in court. The question before us is one of fact, and may, therefore, in the nature of things, be proved or disproved by other facts. It is, whether the Saviour and His apostles did, or did not, sanction the baptism of little children? The practice of the Churches in the ages immediately following, may possibly demonstrate the yea or the nay of this question; and in either case, there is an end of the controversy.

In prosecuting this inquiry very briefly, we shall commence with the testimony of Tertullian, both because he occupies a convenient position, in about the centre of the period, to which our inquiries may be confined, and also because he is sometimes appealed to by the Baptists.

Tertullian was a native of Carthage, of whom nothing, before his conversion, is very certainly known, who became after that event a presbyter

of the Church in his native city, and wrote much and eloquently in the explanation and defence of Christianity. He attached himself to a sect of heretics, known under the name of Montanists, about the year 200, and died in 218, or 220 A.D. He was undoubtedly a man of great genius and learning; and, among many others of his writings, we find one on the subject of baptism, which is generally supposed to have been written before he joined the Montanists, that is, before 200 A.D. It is from his tract on baptism that a quotation has often been made to show the general practice of infant baptism, at the time, among the Christians of his country.

Most strangely, the same passage, or a part of it, has sometimes been cited on the side of the Baptists. In a tract, intituled—"Infant Baptism not known in the Apostolic Church," and published under the sanction of the Baptist Tract Society, we find the following:—"Tertullian is the first father who makes clear and unmistakable allusion to the existence of such a rite as infant baptism; and he refers to it as an innovation *then* coming into practice, and dissuades from it as fraught with great peril. Tertullian reasons thus:—'Why is it necessary that sponsors as well, should be brought into peril, who themselves by death may

abandon their promises, or may be deceived by the growth of a corrupt disposition? The Lord indeed says, Do not hinder them from coming to Me! Let them come, then, provided that they are growing up; let them come, provided that they are learning, provided that they are being taught, whence they come; let them become Christians (with Tertullian this is equivalent to let them be baptized) when they shall have become able to know Christ. Why should an innocent (*i.e.*, infantile) age hasten to the remission of sins? He clearly dissuades from the then commencing practice of infant baptism."

How far this is a correct representation of the position and aims of Tertullian, the reader shall have the opportunity of judging for himself. We will not attempt to describe how Tertullian reasons; we will translate into plain English exactly what he says. Here is the whole passage:—

"And so, according to the state and disposition, (according) even to the age of each person, the delay of baptism is more expedient, principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary, if it is not so necessary, that sponsors also should be brought into danger, who may both fail themselves in

their promises, through mortality, and be deceived by the growth of a bad disposition. The Lord, indeed, says, 'Forbid them not to come to Me!' Let them come, therefore, while they are growing up; let them come while they are learning, while they are being taught whither they are coming; let them become Christians, when they shall have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent age (or time of life) hasten to the remission of sins? There is more cautious action in secular matters, so that one who is not trusted with earthly substance is trusted with Divine. Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem to give to him that asketh. For no less reason are the unmarried also to be deferred, in whom temptation is laid up beforehand, as much in virgins by their maturity, as in widows through their deprivation, until they either marry or are confirmed in stedfastness. If any understand the weight of baptism, they will more fear the *reception* than *De Baptismo,* the *delay*; faith entire is sure of
c. 18. salvation."

The teachings of this remarkable passage are so manifest, as hardly to need pointing out to the reader. The following observations will naturally occur to him at once: —

1. The question here mooted by Tertullian is

not whether baptism in the case of infants is, or is not, absolutely admissible; it is merely a question of greater or less expediency. The deferring of the administration, he says, "is more expedient;" he does not speak like a modern Baptist, and say, it *must* be deferred.

2. So far as Tertullian can be said to object to infant baptism, it is not on the modern Baptist plea, that it is in itself absurd, and can have no religious effect, but on the ground that baptism is in all cases a tremendous reality, exposing the baptized person, if after receiving it he should fall into sin, to the greatest danger of damnation. Those, he tells us, who "understand the weight of baptism, will more fear the reception of it than the delay." He clearly knows nothing whatever of the doctrine, that it depends for its efficacy or significance upon a credible profession, from the recipient, of saving faith. To him it is just as significant in the infant as in the adult.

3. Tertullian objects just as strongly, and for the same reasons, to the baptism of young unmarried women and young widows. How is this? Was the baptism of this class of persons, also a "practice then commencing"? It is obvious, that if Tertullian's words prove anything against the universal prevalence, or the apos-

tolical descent of the one practice, they prove just as much against the other.

4. The whole passage shows that Tertullian is here seeking, not to resist a recent innovation, but rather to restrict a general practice. He is anxious to show the general expediency of delaying baptism, in a number of cases, of which that of little children is only one; and of the three classes of cases, which he mentions, namely, "state," "disposition," and "age," we have no more ground for saying, that he is dissuading from an innovation in the last, than in the others.

In fact, incidentally and indirectly this passage yields the strongest evidence, that Tertullian must have regarded the practice of infant baptism in his day, as having come down from the apostles. For, suppose, for the sake of argument, that it had been really the innovation, which our Baptist friends allege,—a thing unknown in the apostolic age, and without sanction in the New Testament,—how is it to be explained, that Tertullian never even hints at this fact? Anxious, as he evidently was, to delay baptism in the case of children, because of the tremendous perils to which it would expose their eternal interests, no plea would have been so strong and effectual, as to have declared, that there was no Divine warrant or precedent for infant baptism at all,

that it was a monstrous and senseless abuse, which had crept in since the apostles had passed from the earth, and which both they and their Lord would have sternly denounced. Why did not Tertullian, who in all his controversial writings is so remarkable for wielding the most effectual weapons, pass by this, the most effectual of all in the case he was arguing, if it lay so near and ready to his hand? There is but one answer to be given to this question. Tertullian knew of no such weapon; he could not say, that infant baptism had not come down to his own times, with the sanction of apostolic and general usage, the fact being that it had so come down.

This conclusion is strikingly confirmed by the fact, that Tertullian recognises New Testament authority for infant baptism, which he endeavours very absurdly to set aside. The words of Christ as he quotes them, "The Lord, indeed, says, 'Forbid them not to come unto me,'" he evidently regards, as meaning, Let them come to me in baptism, and obviates the command, by saying, "Let them come, therefore, while they are growing up," etc., etc., a sophism too flimsy to have imposed upon a man so sharp-sighted, except as blinded by strong passion, which men of genius are sometimes liable to be. For clearly, whatever our Lord intended to convey by the

words,—“Suffer little children to come unto me,” He meant it to take effect while they *were* little children, and not when they had ceased to be such. To say, let them come, therefore, when they become adults, is to side with the twelve disciples, rather than with their Master, and is just superseding Christ’s authority under the pretence of submitting to it. But this serves to show all the more strongly, how eagerly Tertullian would have laid hold of apostolic precept and example to keep infants from baptism, had any such invaluable help been within his reach; and so, though for reasons, with which our Baptist friends have as little sympathy as we have, he *opposes* the practice of infant baptism, he furnishes incidentally, in his very opposition, the strongest proof both of its authority and its prevalence.

Nor is this proof in the slightest degree impaired by the reference here made by Tertullian to sponsors. This is the first place, in all the ecclesiastical writings which have come down to us, where such officials, if they can be so considered, are mentioned; and, therefore, how and when they originated, and what were originally their functions, are matters for consideration and inference. Attention must be carefully given to the following facts:—

Down even to the times of St. Augustine, in the fifth century, parents, or if they were dead, guardians, were the recognised sponsors of their own children ; and in no case, even in subsequent ages, was more than one sponsor required in the baptism of a child. It was not until the council of Ments, in the year 813 A.D., that parents were forbidden to act in this capacity, and that other sponsors were required, and for the singular reason, as given by the Roman catechism, "in order, that a sharper line of distinction may appear between the natural and the spiritual education of the child." But this prohibition has not always, even in the Romish Church, been strictly carried out, the baptizing priest being allowed to receive the infant from the hands, either of the parent or of the official sponsor. Moreover, in the course of time sponsors were required also in adult baptisms, and even in cases where the adults to be baptized were able to speak and act for themselves.*

Under the light of these facts the most natural and probable origin of sponsors in child baptism appears to be this :—In the days of the apostles, and in the age immediately following, children were baptized, as the facts of the New Testament would lead us to expect, on the security given

* See "Bingham's Antiquities." Book xi.

by professing Christian parents or guardians, that they would come afterwards under religious teaching and care; and as affording such a security in connection with recognised Christian teachers, such parents were so far sponsors, whether so called or not. But in cases where the parents were both dead, or where, by the desertion of the parents, a thing more common in heathendom than in Christendom, helpless infants were left to perish or thrown upon Christian charity, children were often brought forward for baptism, by those, who had mercifully resolved to become their protectors, and to train them up for the service of Christ. Here, however, as in all other cases, the baptizer required the guarantee of discipleship, and here probably more strictly, as the natural securities were wanting. Accordingly the term sponsor came into use, and was applied as a general designation to those, including parents, who pledged themselves to the Christian education of infant candidates for baptism. But in the course of time those views of the ordinance came to prevail, of which the above passage from Tertullian affords such ample evidence. Under the strong tendencies of human nature, and especially as developed by Paganism, to rest in outward forms, an intrinsic efficacy was attributed to the mere rite of

water baptism. It had been called regeneration by Irenæus and Justin Martyr, and was gradually accepted as really being so. In the train of this notion, another quickly followed. It became a matter of the most solemn moment to guard and keep the regeneration, received in baptism, from contamination and destruction. Sins committed after it were supposed to be almost unpardonable, and certainly exposed the sinner to extreme danger. Baptism appeared a very awful thing, and particularly in the case of those who, as children, and young people, were most of all liable to fall by temptation. To escape such fearful perils, even adults, as is well known, often deferred their own baptism until about the period of their death, fearing, as Tertullian says, far more "the reception of it than the delay." It cannot, therefore, be a matter of wonder, if parents, who presented their infants for baptism, were now regarded by baptizers more strictly in the light of sponsors, and, if sponsors were required to promise *more*, and under heavier liabilities.

We know of no explanation of the origin of sponsors which has greater claims to our acceptance than this. Obviously it is unfair to inflate the term, as it occurs in Tertullian, with all the ideas attached to it several ages later. We do

not act thus in other cases. We do not recognise in the primitive bishop all the prelatical authority and pride, with which we find him puffed up in the fifth and sixth centuries. The Lord's supper is not supposed to be the same sort of ordinance in the time of Polycarp as the eucharist of Pope Damasus. We find sponsors in adult baptisms in the later ages of the period; what would our Baptist friends say if from this we were to infer their existence in the earliest? Let the question, in the absence of positive evidence, be fairly considered, and, as we submit, the existence of so-called sponsors in Tertullian's time, goes to confirm our position, as founded on apostolic practice, and certainly affords not the slightest evidence that infant baptism was then a mere innovation.*

We are placed by the testimony of Tertullian within a century of the Apostle John; and, upon this, as inexplicable except on the suppo-

* Even the Pseudo-Dionysius, whose writings cannot be of earlier date than the fourth century, and do not appear in Church history until towards the middle of the sixth, distinctly denies that the sponsor renounces, promises, or believes in the stead of the child, and describes him as, in reality, saying only this: "I promise to persuade this child, when he shall have come of age, to understand the holy things, by my religious instructions, to renounce the adverse powers, and keep clear from them, and to profess and to fulfil the Divine proposals."—Wall., vol. i. p. 415.

sition of the apostolic origin of infant baptism, we might safely rest without farther inquiry. We will, however, just glance at the times preceding and following. In Times before Tertullian. the former, our information, on this as on other subjects, is scanty, in consequence of the paucity of earlier writings, which have come down to us. *Irenæus*, bishop of Lyons in France, Irenæus. originally, however, from Asia Minor, who received instruction from Polycarp and other immediate disciples of the apostles, was elected bishop of Lyons in 177, and died probably about 202 A.D., says,—“He (Christ) came to save all persons by Himself—all, I say, who by Him are *regenerated* to God, infants and little ones, and boys, and youths, and old men.” Here, no one disputes, that by *regenerated*, Irenæus means baptized, or, at least, inseparably connects regeneration with baptism after the invariable usage of that age. In this passage, therefore, the practice of infant baptism is attested.

Justin Martyr, originally born at Justin Martyr. Sichem, in Samaria, who afterwards studied philosophy at Ephesus, became a Christian, and suffered martyrdom probably in the year 165 A.D., says,—“Many men and women among us, sixty and seventy years old, were discipled to Christ in their childhood.” Discipled, we add, most probably they were by baptism.

Polycarp. Polycarp, the disciple and friend of the Apostle John, who became bishop of Smyrna, and died as a martyr in the year 160 or 167 A.D., when brought before the Roman Pro-consul and commanded by him to deny Christ, replied, "Eighty and six years I have been His servant, and He has never wronged me." We presume, as most probable, that eighty-six years before this time, Polycarp was a little child, and that therefore he states his service of Christ from his baptism.

If these testimonies are few and meagre, it must be remembered, that so also are all references to baptism within the same period, and that, moreover, there is not to be found a single line or word in any of these early writers to the effect that baptism was confined to adults, or necessarily presupposed a credible profession of faith from the recipient of it.

Times after Tertullian. In the times immediately *following* those of Tertullian, we meet with many testimonies, which attest in the strongest manner the apostolic origin of the administration of the rite to infants, though baptism may, in consequence of such fears as we have seen urged by Tertullian, in many instances have been deferred.

Council of Carthage, 258 A.D. In a council, for example, held at Carthage, under the presidency of

Cyprian, the bishop, no less than sixty-six bishops from different parts of the surrounding country, assembled to discuss the question, whether the baptism of infants should always take place on the eighth day, as circumcision had done among the Jews. But there was no difference of opinion or dispute as to the practice of infant baptism itself.

Origen, who for some time was at the head of the catechetical school at Alexandria, afterwards paid a visit to Rome, subsequently taught and expounded the scriptures publicly at Cæsarea, and died at Tyre, in the seventieth year of his age, speaks very decidedly on the subject. The following passages are taken from his homilies on different books of Scripture:—

Origen—died
254 A.D.

“Infants are by the usage of the Church baptized.”

“Because, by the sacrifice of baptism, the corruption of their birth is removed, infants are baptized.”

“The Church has received a tradition from the apostles to give baptism to infants.”

“According to that saying of our Lord concerning infants (and thou wast an infant when baptized), ‘Their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven.’”

Other similar passages might be cited from Origen.

Gregory Nazianzen, 289
A.D.

Gregory Nazianzen, presbyter, and for a short time bishop, recommended that children should be baptized at the age of three years.

It is unnecessary to adduce later testimonies, or else those which could be taken from the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom, would fill a volume. In fact, in reference to the acceptance and prevalence of infant baptism, in times later than Cyprian, there can be no controversy. It is worthy of mention,

Pelagius. however, on the authority of St. Augustine, that the heretic Pelagius, in the fifth century, having been charged with the denial of infant baptism, addressed a letter to Pope Innocent I., in which he indignantly repudiates the accusation, and adds, that "he had never heard of any impious heretic, who held such an opinion concerning little children."

This testimony of Pelagius is very important, and, in fact, almost decisive of the question. For not only was he a man of intelligence, and a great traveller, but he also had, in the position, which he took up against the doctrine of innate depravation, the very strongest controversial reasons for branding the practice of infant bap-

tism, as a groundless innovation in post-apostolic times, if he could have done so with even a plausible show of historical truth. The student, who persists in wading through the dreary pages of St. Augustine's antipelagian writings, will find him again and again pressing upon Pelagius and Julian of Eklalum this, as an unanswerable question,—“If infants have no sin to be forgiven, why are they baptized for the remission of sins?” Yet, what answer could have been easier or more effectual for their purpose, than to have said,—“Infant baptism was unknown to the apostles, and did not come into use until long after they were all dead, and has therefore no Divine authority to redeem it from being a worthless innovation”? Both were men of courage, and proved themselves capable of strong assertions. But they were not equal to this. Pelagius, on the contrary, professed himself a Pædobaptist, and declared that he had never heard of even a heretic, who was anything else.

As a set-off against the practice of infant baptism, it has been alleged, though as far as we know, only by the late Dr. Carson, that that of infant communion, that is to say, the custom of giving the elements of the Lord's Supper to baptized children, was also universal within the same period of antiquity. But this assertion is

wholly unsustained. The earliest reference to the subject occurs in Cyprian after the middle of the third century; and there is nothing even in *his* writings to show, that the custom had either been of long standing, or was universally observed even by the African Churches. No mention is made of it by Origen, or indeed by any writer earlier than, or even contemporary with, Cyprian.* Subsequently it was zealously promoted by St. Augustine. It probably never had a very fixed tenure of ecclesiastical observance; and though it still lingers in the Greek Church, no trace of it appears in that of the West, after the twelfth century. It was formally condemned by the Council of Trent.

Setting, therefore, this practice aside, as in no sense presenting a parallel to the observance of infant baptism, the facts of antiquity, we have been considering, will very well sustain the following conclusions:—

1. The use in the second and following centuries of the catechumenical discipline, evinces an entire change of view, as to the nature and consequences of baptism, from that, which we find in the New Testament. The word catechu-

* No dependence can be placed on the references to the practice, in the anonymous compilation known under the title of "Apostolical Constitutions," as being of uncertain date, referred by some critics to the seventh century, and certainly not earlier than the fourth.

men, primarily denotes one, who is under instruction ; and in itself it is equally applicable, whether he receives the instruction after or before baptism. But in Church history the term is exclusively given to those, who were passing through a course of teaching, with a view to the reception of the baptismal rite. In this respect there is a direct contrast between the usage of the apostles, and that of the following ages. "The most attentive student," says Dr. Halley, "of the apostolic age can never find a catechumen ; the most cursory reader of the succeeding centuries perpetually meets with crowds." There is no way of explaining this difference, as it appears to us, except by supposing, that the views entertained of baptism had meanwhile undergone an entire change. Soon after the spiritual wisdom and oversight of the apostles had been removed from the Church, regeneration, under those natural tendencies, which Paul laboured so earnestly to repress among the Galatians,—regeneration, of which water-baptism was only the emblem, came to be more and more closely associated, and at length, identified with it. This was succeeded by grave fears as to the consequences of those sins, into which baptized persons were apt enough to fall ; and then, as these fears increased, came the apparent neces-

sity of deferring the administration of the rite, by interjecting a long course of previous teaching and training. Hence the rise of the catechumens, in the technical sense of the word. Otherwise, the difference between the primitive and the after ecclesiastical usages in connection with baptism is inexplicable. Certainly, seeing that the discipline of catechumens existed even along with infant baptism in the third century, it must have existed also in the apostolic age, if, as the Baptists would have us believe, infant baptism was then unknown. But it is just in that age, that not only we can discover no trace of such a discipline, but everything goes to show, that a regular course of Christian instruction then followed baptism, and certainly did not precede it.

2. Considering this change in the doctrinal views generally entertained of baptism, clearly, had Pædobaptism not come down from the apostles, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to have introduced it in the second and following centuries. Coming as a mere innovation, out of tune with the notions and feelings of the times, what motive could there be for introducing it, and if introduced by some eccentric person, who could have been induced to accept it? Parents would hardly expose their helpless infants to such dangers. Christian ministers

could not be expected to countenance a practice, which was in opposition to their general teachings and warnings. No person of ordinary Christian benevolence would favour an innovation, the direct tendency of which, was to expose the young and immature to the peril of sinning almost beyond the limits of the Divine mercy, not to mention, that its effect would be to stultify the elaborate system devised for the preparation of catechumens for baptism.

8. If in such circumstances it would have been very difficult to introduce infant baptism at all, to have done so, without calling forth dissent and opposition, we must, without hesitation, pronounce to have been a moral impossibility. For, let it just be distinctly considered, what it is that our Baptist friends ask us to believe. They require that, in times, in which controversies and divisions of opinion were rife among Christians, on all subjects, from the highest and most solemn, as those of the Trinity and the Person of the Son of God, down to the lowest and most trivial, as the day on which Easter should be observed, we shall meekly accept the position, that a practice of infant baptism, entirely and essentially opposed to the nature of the ordinance, as set forth in the New Testament, utterly unknown to the apostles, or perhaps

to any one before the middle of the second century, was after that time introduced, in opposition to a strong current of desire, from the consideration of the awful liabilities involved in it, to postpone baptism even in the case of young women and widows, and that it gradually became, in the course of two or three centuries, the universal practice of the Church in all countries, without calling forth a single dissentient or opposing voice! To us the position, we are thus required to accept, involves an utter impossibility.

The only mode of relieving this, to us insuperable difficulty, is by pointing out the dissentient and recalcitrant Baptists of the second and third centuries, if any are to be found. "I ask them," says Dr. Halley, "to find a solitary Baptist in their sense, a clear, well-defined, honest-looking, plain-spoken Baptist like themselves, down to the close of the first Millennium of the Christian faith." This challenge has not yet been responded to; but, until it is taken up and fully met, we shall rest in the following conclusion,—The recorded facts of the first three or four centuries prove two things, namely, that the practice of infant baptism descended from the age of the apostles, *and* that, if it had not done so, it could not possibly have been introduced after the first half of the second century.



